Imam Ali in Twelver-Shi'ite and Barelwi [Ahl i Sunnat wa jama'at] traditions of Islam: An Investigation into perceptions of Sainthood, Martyrdom and Prophethood within Shi'ite and Barelwi Islam, and the way in which these concepts are used and understood by Religious Leaders of these Traditions resident in the UK.

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Ba*kr:* [r. 632-634] father-in-law to the Prophet as his daughter 'Aisha had married Muhammad; first caliph after the Prophet's death.

Abu Muhammad Hasan ibn 'Ali: [1/623-49/669], second Imam of the Shi'a; abdicated in 41/661 to Medina. Allegedly poisoned on the orders of the Umayyad ruler Mu'awiya.

'Abbasid: descendants of al-'Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet and thus claiming kinship to Imam 'Ali. Seized the caliphate in 132/750.

Ahl i-Bayt: the Household/Family of the Prophet viz 'Ali, Fatima and their sons Hasan and Husayn.

'Aisha: [614- 670], youngest wife of the Prophet, opposed 'Ali at the Battle of the Camel [656], collector of Hadith traditions.

Akhbar [sing: *khabar*]: Traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad or the Imams. Composed of two parts – the names of the transmitters of the Tradition *isnad*, and the actual text *matn*. In this dissertation where Tradition or tradition is used it signifies a *khabar* or *hadith*.

Al- : family of.....

'Alid: a descendant of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet and first Imam of the Shi'a.

'Alam: a standard carried in the Muharram processions commemorating the martyrdom of Imam Husayn.

'Ali ibn Abu Talib: [598-40/661] cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammad. Fourth Caliph of undivided Islam, and first Imam of the Shi'a traditions.

'Allama: learned scholar of the ulama.

Amir: commander, leader.

Ansar: 'the helpers' – the Medinan followers of the Prophet.

Ayatollah: 'sign of God' the highest ranking scholar in the Twelver Shi'a tradition.

Ashraf: term used to describe Muslim descendants from immigrants to India

Bab: gate – one of the titles given to Imam ‘Ali.

Barakah: Blessing, grace associated with and bestowed by a person, time or place.

Batin: Inner, esoteric teachings.

Ba'yah: Recognition of a ruler; acceptance of a Sufi master by a novice/initiate into an order.

Bidah: innovation in custom or doctrine.

Caliph [khalifa, pl khulafa] successor – title given to the successors of Muhammad.

Dar al-harb ‘the land of war’ territory not under Muslim Law.

Dar al-Islam ‘the land of Islam’ territory where Muslim Law prevails.

Dar ul-Ulum: ‘the abode of the sciences’ a Muslim college or seminary.

Dargah: shrine or tomb of a Muslim saint, which has become a focus of pilgrimage.

Dhikr: Recollection – in Sufism a spiritual exercise of repeating the names of God to order to gain a sense of God’s presence.

Fana' fillah: annihilation in God.

Faqih: scholar in religious law within the Shi'a tradition, equivalent of *mujtahid* in Sunnism.

Fatima: [d. 11/632] daughter of the Prophet, married to ‘Ali, and mother of Hasan and Husayn, second and third Imams of the Shi’a traditions respectively.

Fatwa: a written response or legal judgement given by a scholar – *mufti* or *'alim.*

Fiqh religious jurisprudence, the application of the *shari'a.*

Ghayba: occultation or concealment.

Ghulat: followers of extreme movements.

Ghuluww or *ghaliyya:* extreme doctrines putting their adherents outside Islam.

Hadith: traditions, sayings or actions of the Prophet.

Hajj: the pilgrimage to Mecca undertaken according to rituals during the month of Dhu’l-Hijja.

Haqiqa: Mystical truth.

Hasanid: descendant of the Imam Hasan, oldest son of 'Ali and Fatima.

Hazrat: title of respect and veneration eg to Hazrat 'Ali.

Hikma: Divine Wisdom or Philosophy, Theosophy.

Husaynid: descendant of Imam Husayn, the younger son of 'Ali and Fatima.

Ibn: son of...

Ijaza: 'permission' - for a student to give his teacher's doctrine or a testimony to his ability to exercise *ijtihad.*

Ijtihad: 'exertion' - the process of coming to decisions or judgements on matters of religious law by the use of reason or jurisprudence *usul al-fiqh.*

Ilm: knowledge.

Imam: 'one who stands in front' – principally for the Shi'a one of the legitimate successors of the Prophet Muhammad; for the Sunni as well as for the Shi'a the one who leads the prayers in the *masjid* for the community.

Imambara: 'house of the Imam' – place where *tazias* are kept to mourn Imam Husayn eg the Qasaf-ud Daulah's *Imambara* in Lucknow, India.

Irfan: gnostic or mystical knowledge.

Ismah: sinlessness/freedom from error – an attribute given to the Shi'a Imams.

Isnad: chain of transmission especially of hadith reports.

Ja'far al-Sadiq: [80/699, 83/702, 86/705-48/765] sixth Imam of the Shi'a; renowned for his learning and spirituality. A key figure in the evolution of the Twelver Shi'a expression.

Jama'at: a 'body' or 'group' of Muslim believers.

Jihad: holy war undertaken to defend Islam against an aggressor or to expand its boundaries.

Kafir: a non-Muslim i.e. one who is unfaithful.

Kalam: Speculative Theology.

Karbala: the plain in Iraq where Imam Husayn was martyred.

Karama: miracle.

Khadija:[d. 619] first wife of the Prophet, whom she married in 604. She is regarded as the first person to embrace Islam.

Khalifa: 'Deputy' or 'Representative' eg of the Prophet in the first four successors to him; also used of individuals who have become accomplished disciples of a Sufi master and have been appointed to represent their Pir.

Khums: 'one fifth' – a religious tax originally paid to the Prophet, and within Shi'ism to the Imams. In contemporary Shi'ism paid to the believer's *marja' at-taqlid* in his role as the 'representative of the Imam'.

Kitab: book.

Madrasa: religious college

Majlis: an assembly or organisation. Often used to describe a gathering on the Prophet's birthday or the anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn.

Mar'ashi: descendant of Abu'l-Hasan 'Ali al-Ma'rashi, a fifth generation descendant of the Fourth Imam, Zaynu'l-'Abidin.

Marja'at-taqlid: 'point of reference' – one who by his teaching and integrity is qualified to be followed and imitated in all points of religious law and practice by Shi'a people.

Masjid: 'place of prostration' – the mosque.

Ma'sum: infallibility/sinlessness.

Maulana: a title for a learned scholar and teacher.

Maulvi [maulavi]: a scholar.

Maulid: Celebration of the Prophet's birthday or of a Saint's birth.

Mawla: 'Lord' or 'master'; or a 'client' of one of the Arab tribal groups. In the first generations of Islam all converts had to become clients of one of these Arab tribes in a socially dependent and inferior position.

Mir: equivalent of *sayyid* as a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. Is also used as equivalent of *amir.*

Muhajirun: 'emigrants' – those who left Mecca and migrated to Medina with and during the life of the Prophet. It is also used to describe those who migrated to the borders of the Islamic Empire to share in *jihad.*

Muharram: first month of the Muslim calendar in whichj Imam Husayn was martyred.

Mujtahid: a scholar who has attained the level to have permission to give *ijtihad.*

Mulla: a Persian term for a religious scholar and member of the *ulama.*

Murid: Novice or adherent in a Sufi order or tariqa.

Murshid: Spiritual teacher

Mu'tazili: adherent of the school of theology *Mu'tazila* that stressed certain issues: the unity and justice of God, that the Qur'an is created, the free-will of man. Its evolution was based upon rationality.

Na'ib: 'representative' – *Na'ib al-Imam* 'representative of the Imam'; *Na'ib al-Khass* 'representative of the Hidden Imam'.

Nabi: prophet.

Nass: 'designation' – within Shi'ism taken as the designation of 'Ali by Muhammad as his successor and thence from one Imam to the next.

Pir: a Sufi master or teacher, also known as a *murshid.*

Qadi: judge.

Qudrah: power.

Qutb: 'Pole' of the universe - title of the supreme leader of the saintly hierarchy.

Rasul: apostle or messenger of God. Title given to Prophet Muhammad.

Rawda: gathering amongst the Shi'a for recitation of the sufferings of the Imams.

Rijal: the study of the biographies of the ulama and transmitters of the *hadith.*

Sayyid: designates a man as a descendant of the Prophet. Descendants of the Prophet may wear green turbans but ulama who are *sayyids* can wear black turbans.

Silsilah: 'chain' of spiritual descent; a Sufi Order.

Shahid: martyr.

Shari'a: the religious law.

Shaykh: 'elder' – sometimes used for a leading member of the ulama, or a Sufi teacher [equivalent of *pir*]. Also used in the Arab world for tribal leaders.

Surah: chapter in the Qur'an.

Tafsir: commentary or exegesis of the Qur'an.

Tallab [talib: sing*]:* a religious student at a *madrasa.*

Taqiyya: dissimulation of one's religious beliefs to protect oneself, one's family, or property from harm. A feature found amongst Shi'a people.

Taqlid: imitation or following of a scholar *mujtahid.*

Tariqa: The Sufi way – either a Sufi method of spiritual discipline or an actual organisation as an 'order'.

Tasawwuf: Sufism.

Tazia: models of the tombs of Imam Husayn and his family carried in procession during Muharram.

Ulama: 'learned persons' – the religious scholars of Islam. *'Alim* may be used of a scholar learned in a particular branch of the religious sciences.

Umar ibn al-Khattab: [r. 634-644] second caliph after the Prophet.

Ummah: The Muslim community.

Urs: 'wedding' a term used in India for a festival commemorating the death of a *pir* or saint.

Usul: 'principles' - *usul al-din*: principal aspects of religion; *usul al-fiqh:* principles of jurisprudence.

Uthman ibn Affan: [r. 644-656] third caliph after the Prophet, whom he had originally opposed.

Vilayat-Ifaqih: the idea that government lies with those learned in jurisprudence.

Wali: guardian, defender or helper, a title given to 'Ali and the Imams. Also used of Sufi saints.

Wilayah: used both to describe political government as well as spiritual authority and guidance.

Zakat: religious tax paid by believers.

Ziyarat: Pilgrimage to a Sufi shrine or an offering made to a Sufi saint.

iii. Preface.

This thesis is the sole work of Ian Geoffrey Williams, and has not been offered for examination at any other institution.

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Ian G. Williams.

iv. The Abstract.

In Sunni estimation, ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib is one of the four *Rashidun Khilafat* 'Rightly Guided Caliphs' who succeeded the Prophet. In Shi'a understanding ‘Ali was duly designated as his immediate successor by Muhammad. The varying understandings of ‘Ali are examined in four roles: as *Wali* [friend of God], as *Imam* [Leader], as *Shadid* [Martyr for God], and as *Bab* [Gateway to Spiritual Knowledge].

In the thesis ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib is examined as the bearer of many attributes some descriptive with others of a more esoteric nature. A significant term ascribed to ‘Ali is *wali* [friend/saint] of God. This is included in the distinctive three tenet Shi'a *shahadah.*

The term and title *Imam* is used both for the Prayer Leader of a Muslim community and within the Shi'a tradition for the legitimate ruler of the wider *ummah.* The concept of the *Imam* is examined for Shi’a understandings and the comparable idea of *qutb* pole, within Sufi influenced Sunnism such as the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at.*

Within the Shi'a tradition there is a profound awareness of *shahid* martyrdom for Imam ‘Ali, and the majority of the succeeding Imams. This consciousness centres in particular on the death of his youngest son, Imam Husayn as commemorated in the month of Muharram and the 12th day - Ashura.

'Ali is acknowledged by both Shi'a and Sunni Sufi traditions as a key figure in the transmission of esoteric knowledge. A majority of Sufi streams trace their sources of spiritual knowledge to 'Ali. A comparison is made between the respective understandings of 'Ali's role in the Twelver Shi'a and Sufi expressions.

With the development of British colonial rule in nineteenth century India, Muslim traditions found themselves in a new political and religious context as a minority. Movements emerged to create fresh Muslim identities by which to address this situation. Drawing upon a scholarly past tradition, Ahmad Raza Khan led the *Ahl i-Sunnat* movement alongside other Sunni groups and the Shi'a tradition. Within British India, Muslim groups found themselves in rivalry and competition with each other for adherents and to some extent in rivalry with Christian missionaries and Hindu revivalists. Amongst the symbols used in the intra-faith conflict were the Prophet, 'Ali and their family.

An examination is made of the process by which religious ideas concerning 'Ali have been transferred by the migration of Muslim groups from South Asia into the British context. Rivalry between *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* and Shi'a groups has continued in their use of 'Ali as a symbol of their respective theological emphases. Critical reading of texts in English and English translation relating to the evolution of understandings of devotion to 'Ali ibn Abu Talib amongst Twelver Shi'a and Ahl i-Sunnat traditions in the UK is addressed.

Examination follows of essential elements of devotion accorded to Imam 'Ali and to the Prophet Muhammad, and the extent to which each mode of devotion has influenced the other.

Parallels are examined between the two traditions regarding the sources of their respective understandings of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib. Conclusions are offered from fieldwork and textual study in discussing possible common derivations of these models of devotion and understandings.

v. Introduction and Acknowledgements.

This study examines the status and identity of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib in Twelver-Shi'a and Sunni Barelwi *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at t*raditions of Islam as held and understood by Religious Leaders of these traditions resident in the UK.

Its expression and understanding is investigated through the historical development of Shi'ism and the writings of Twelver-Shi'a jurists as well as in interpretations of Hadith Traditions. Contemporary writings of Twelver-Shi'a scholars *mujathidin* are also considered.

The perception of the status of Imam 'Ali is also examined in the nineteenth century *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* Barelwi traditionalist movement in India and its subsequent twentieth century developments most particularly as transplanted by migration to Britain. Especial attention is given to the writings, Qur'anic and Hadith interpretations, and judgements *fatawa* of Imam Ahmad Raza Khan [1856-1921].

Chapter 1 offers a Research Theory and Methodology for the dissertation. Placed here it begins to define how following examination of the key concepts surrounding 'Ali, and consideration of the development of the *Ahl i-Sunnat WA jama'at* and *Shi'a* traditions in India and then in Britain, conclusions and responses to the Research Questions will be framed. The methodology has been adopted in the light of the textual and historical aspect of the research together with the significant fieldwork element, which examines the situation of the representatives of the two Muslim traditions being considered.

Chapter 2 discusses in four sub-sections aspects of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib's roles and status with both the Shi'a tradition and also the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* expression beginning with an examination of his life and relationship with the Prophet Muhammad. 'Ali is accorded some significant titles – *wali,* friend of God; for the Shi'a he is the successor of the Prophet and *Imam;* 'Ali is seen to die as a martyr *shahid* within both Shi'a and Sunni understanding; whilst for both traditions 'Ali is the source *bab* and transmitter of esoteric knowledge. The place of the Prophet's daughter and 'Ali's wife, Fatima is examined to provide a further dimension to understanding of these devotional concepts and practices. These are considered and contrasted to investigate whether the perceptions held about 'Ali in these two traditions are derivative of one another in the light of Research Question 2 [see *infra* 1.2].

In chapter 3 the history of the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* and Shi'a traditions in nineteenth century India is examined as Muslim traditions found themselves in a new socio-political and religious context with the advent of British rule. The respective theological emphases of the two streams are considered.

Chapter 4 offers a consideration of the uses of 'Ali and the Prophet's family by the Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* both in rivalry with one another as well as with Christian missionaries and Hindu revivalist groups during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Chapter 5 addresses the uses of 'Ali in the British context having examined the migration of South Asian origin Islam into Britain since the late nineteenth century. Key religious ideas and symbols, which are used within the respective *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* and *Shi'a* traditions are discussed and considered.

Both Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat* Sunni adherents have migrated and settled in the UK since the late nineteenth and certainly in the mid-twentieth centuries. They have brought with them key ideas of belief and spiritual expression into a new context within which the British born generations have been nurtured. In chapter 6 therefore, examples of fieldwork responses are recorded and contrasted, and the ways in which the understandings and ideas relating to 'Ali ibn Abu Talib have been transferred to and used within the UK situation are addressed. The research questions are examined and conclusions are drawn. By drawing upon the theological and historical examination of the place of 'Ali in Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* understandings found in chapters 2 – 5 the results of fieldwork amongst representatives of the two contrasting Muslim traditions can be introduced to consider [1] the contemporary relationship between Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* perceptions of veneration offered to 'Ali; [2] the extent to which these patterns are derivative from one another; [3] a re-revaluation of the Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* perspectives on the issue; and [4] the modern relationship between the two expressions as an exercise in intra-religious understanding.

It is acknowledged that a greater wealth of textual resources are available for examination of the Shi'a traditions and in particular the Twelver Shi'a expression than for the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* movement. This is reflected in the dissertation but it is suggested that this does not detract from the conclusions drawn. Essentially, the Shi'a draw upon considerable intellectual and literary output over the course of Islamic history with their distinctive religious identity and practices delineated by their minority status and sense of oppression by the Sunni majority. By contrast the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* as a nineteenth century development, albeit one drawing upon classic traditional Sunni practices and beliefs, have both a briefer history and less of a theological corpus than their Shi'a co-religionists.

However, additional and significant sources of understanding of Imam 'Ali are found in biographical studies and accounts of his life, importance and achievements. which are common to both traditions. English language texts are discussed and examined for their influence upon contemporary understandings of the Imam in the respective traditions.

The fieldwork research interviews are designed to complement the literature review as it investigates how contemporary practice of devotion to Imam 'Ali has emerged from and been formed by historical belief and custom.

1.2 Aims.

1.2.1 To investigate the contemporary relationship between Shi'ite and Barelwi perceptions of the veneration of Imam 'Ali and the Prophet Muhammad discussed in the history of ideas within and between these traditions.

1.2.2 To test the hypothesis that contemporary expressions among Shi'ite and Barelwi Muslims resident in the UK of these perspectives disregard the extent to which one set of perceptions is derived from the other.

1.2.3 To analyse the implications of this hypothesis for a re-evaluation of and a fresh approach to Shi'ite and Barelwi perspectives on the issue.

1.2.4 To place the findings of the literary and field-research within the wider Muslim traditions and thereby to contribute to an understanding of a historical and contemporary area of tension and polarisation.

The veneration of the Prophet Muhammad and Imam 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, his cousin and son-in-law, and Fourth Caliph of undivided Islam has a variety of expression amongst Muslim Traditions. Amongst the Twelver-Shi'ite and the Sunni Barelwi *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* the Prophet Muhammad has a high salvific status, which is closely associated with the identity of Imam 'Ali. In Twelver-Shi'ite Islam, 'Ali is the first Imam in the special sense in which the tradition understands this term, that as the Prophet's directly appointed successor, an intermediary between humankind and God in this world, he is unique in his own age, and necessary for salvation. In Twelver-Shi'ite Islam, 'Ali and the succeeding Imams, who descend from him are beings of superhuman virtue possessing supernatural gifts and absolute spiritual and temporal authority.

The Twelver-Shi'ite perception of Imam 'Ali may be seen as a separate development from the majority Sunni Muslim understandings as it derives its essence from a parallel evolution of devotion towards the Prophet Muhammad himself. Twelver-Shi'a reject any belief which might affirm that Imam 'Ali is a partaker of divine attributes or actions which could make him an incarnation of the Godhead. They have been at pains to confer upon Imam 'Ali the identity of intimate familial relationship with the Prophet Muhammad, whilst nevertheless avoiding the transgression of Qur'anic teaching that the Prophet is the last and the seal of the Prophetic line known to the Semitic and all traditions.

The *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* movement, is popularly known from the place of origin of its figurehead Ahmad Riza Khan [1856-1921] in North India, Bareilly as the Barelwi movement. It emerged as a preservationist/traditionalist movement in parallel with reformist groups such as the *Deoband* and *Ahl i. Hadith* in the context of 19th century India under British rule [Robinson: 1988; Andrews: 1998]. The Barelwi assert an Islamic devotionalist tradition with its roots in Sufism, which leads to several features standing out as characteristics. Ahmad Raza Khan was a descendant of a line of scholars. He directed his career and energies in opposing any who were critical of traditional Muslim practices and beliefs, placing at the centre of his teachings a portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad who held total knowledge of spiritual truth, and was seen as unique amongst all men. As a movement it has grown both within South Asia and in the UK. Drawing its constituency from rural origin peoples, it defends traditional religious practices of a popular nature.

Firstly, the Prophet is given a high status involving several doctrines marked by Sufi influence. For example, the *Nur Muhammadi* [the light of Muhammad] is seen as deriving from God's own light. In effect the world has been created for the Prophet [Metcalf: 1982. 301]. Thus the Prophet is human but with a different humanity from that of others. There is a second emphasis that the Prophet has unique knowledge of the unknown *Il'al ghaib* By this affirmation the Prophet is considered to have full knowledge of spiritual matters *haqiqat-i ruh,* could interpret metaphorical passages in the Qur'anic revelation, and knew the past and the future. Thirdly therefore, the Prophet may be addressed as intercessor with its intimate association with him as mediator *wasila* [Padwick: 1961. 40]. This level of respect for the Prophet is parallel to that found in the Shi'a expression and also embraces his immediate family - a particular feature again of Shi'ism - with acknowledgement of 'Ali as one of the four 'rightly guided caliphs' *rashidun khilafat.* Within Sufism, 'Ali is held as the fountainhead of esoteric knowledge and with Abu Bakr, first Caliph after the Prophet's death, the source of inspiration for subsequent Sufi Orders *Tariqah.* All of the Sunni orders include at least one of the Shi'a Imams in their lineages, and most Sufi genealogies reach the Prophet through Imam 'Ali [with the notable exception of the Naqshbandiya which goes through Abu Bakr instead]. There is a fourth and further common area for examination in understanding of the 'Perfect Man'. Haydar Amuli [1320-1385] developed this concept from Ibn Arabi [1165-1240] and his systematisation of Sufi teaching with his insistence on the importance of the Perfect Man as the interface *barzakh* between God and humankind. Amuli stresses that this figure can only be 'Ali as the first Imam contradicting Ibn Arabi's focus upon Jesus of Nazareth. Consequently, there is an interplay of sources for mainstream Sunni Sufism and Twelver-Shi'ism for the 'Perfect Man' and that of the eschatological ideal Imam.

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In the Twelver Shi'a tradition: Hojjat ul Islam Ibrahim Kazerooni, of the Islamic Centre of England, Maida Vale, London; Maulana Muhammad Shomali, The Islamic Centre, Oxford Street, Manchester; Shaik Arif Abdul Hussein, The Shi'a Academy and Clifton Road Masjid, Balsall Heath, Birmingham; Dr A. Ezzati, The Islamic College for Advanced Studies, 133, High Road, Willesden Green, London; Dr Javad Gohari, The Spiritual Advance Movement, 25 Hamby Grange, Leeds; Syed Bavam Naqvi, Chairman, Southfield Square Shi'a Masjid, Manningham Lane, Bradford; Dr Laitha Kubba and Mr M. Khoei, The Al-Khoei Foundation, Chevening Road, London; Sayed Waqar Shah, Jaffaria Islamic Centre, 404 Moss Lane East, Manchester; Imam Malik Mohammed Yaqoob, Shi'a Islamic Centre, 143, Preston New Road, Blackburn, Lancs; Maulana Syed Shamim-us Sibtan Rizvi, S I Education Society, 133 Rowan Road, London; Muhsin

Dharansi, World Federation of Khoja Shi'' Ithna-Ashari Muslim Communities, Islamic Centre, Wood lane, Stanmore, Middlesex; Muslim Kassamali Rajani, Ithna Ashari Community, 127 Loughborough Road, Leicester.

In the Sunni tradition linked to the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at*: Maulana Azmiz, Imam, North Manchester Central Masjid, Cheetham Hill, Manchester; Dr Bashir Ahmad, Ibad ur Rahman Trust, Woodlands Road, Manchester; Haji Sandal Hussain, Masjid –e – Aqsa Preston Hanfi Sunni Muslim Society, Fishwick Parade, Preston, Lancs; Hazrat Allama Fazul Aqtab Siddiqi, Principal, Hijaz College, Watling Street, Nuneaton, Warwickshire; and Maulana Chowdury, Lecturer, Hijaz College, Nuneaton; Mr Yusuf Kumar, Trustee, Sultan Bahu Trust, Balsall Heath, Birmingham; M. Nasir Anwer, Dar ul Uloom Islamia, Golden Hillock Road, Small Heath, Birmingham; Mr Muhammad I. Kashmiri, Editor *Islamic Times*, Raza Academy, 138 Northgate Road, Stockport, and Mr Afzal Habib, Trustee, Raza Academy, Stockport; Imam Muhammad Chowdury, Shah Jehan Masjid, Chester., Dr Musharaf Hussain, The Islamic Centre, Forest Fields, Nottingham; Muhammad H. Khan, Leicester Central Masjid, Conduit Street, Leicester.

The glossary and transliteration of Arabic vocabulary into English has been based upon *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* vols 1 – 9 [1997]. In using technical terms there has been a difficult choice whether to give them in their Arabic, Urdu or Persian form. For example, most of the texts use Arabic terms but Persian is the language of the majority of the Twelver Shi'a and Urdu is the *lingua franca* of most *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* adherents. Arabic has been taken as a preference with some exceptions being those terms that are mainly used in their Persian form. When

Shi'a Islam is referred to in the text, it is the Usuli school of Ithna 'Ashari [Twelver] Shi'a Islam i.e the mainstream tradition to which the majority of Shi'is belong in the modern world. Other expressions of Shi'a Islam are named and described specifically. The use of the title 'the Prophet' refers to the Prophet Muhammad and where the customary honorific is not used no disrespect to him is intended. The theological term 'God' has been used throughout the dissertation with the understanding that firstly, it corresponds to the Arabic *'Allah* signifying the Transcendent Personal God of the Semitic traditions and secondly, that it is used as such in Muslim academic texts and popular writings.

Whenever possible in providing calendar dates in the text both the Islamic *hijri* dating as well as the Gregorian dating system has been used. Like almost all Semitic calendars, the Arab pattern is based upon the lunar cycles rather than upon those of the sun, on which rest the Julian and Gregorian calendars. In Muslim thought the actual physical sighting of the new moon reflects the understanding that it is in the immediate surrounding conditions rather than theoretical astronomical timing that the Divine Will is revealed and that this should determine time and sacred acts.

Chapter 1.

The Methodology.

The Research Instrument.

1. The Choice of Method.

Textual l Analysis:

Reading has been made of texts in English and English translation relating to the evolution of both the Twelver Shi'a and Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* traditions and their diaspora in Britain. Parallel to this analysis, an examination has been undertaken of biographical studies of Imam 'Ali ibn Abu Talib [599 - 661/40] tracing the preferred usage of texts and biographies in various communities and any Sufi influences on their devotional practices. The aim of this has been to establish the essential elements of the devotion accorded to Imam 'Ali and to the Prophet Muhammad, and to examine the extent to which each mode of devotion has influenced the other within the history of ideas.

1.1 Interviews.

In conjunction with the textual analysis a purposive sample was taken of contemporary British adherents of the Twelver Shi'ite and Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* traditions. My aim has been to interview community leaders who will be expected to hold views concerning the status, veneration and understandings of Imam 'Ali and the Prophet Muhammad in their traditions. Between twelve and fifteen nominated representatives of these communities [Imams, Chairmen of Mosque and educational institutions] in UK cities with significant South Asian and Iranian populations [i.e. Bradford, Manchester, Leicester, London and Birmingham] were interviewed. In this 'snowball' sample using Qualitative, and Paradigm Research Methods, the number of interviewees were expected to give a commonality of response indicative of their respective Tradition's perspective. The sample was created as representatives of the two respective traditions either nominated or commended other community leaders to my attention for interview. Through such guided interviews therefore, comparable data was obtained to create a conceptual framework, which sought to define Muslim understandings of the Imam 'Ali and the Prophet Muhammad, their relationship, and the contemporary devotion to each figure.

The literature review and the fieldwork are of equal weight and compliment each other as the investigation addresses how contemporary practice has emerged from and been formed by historical belief and custom.

1.2 The Research Questions.

As this study is an exploration of contrasting perspectives about the historical personality of Imam 'Ali ibn Abu Talib [599 - 661/40] and his significance to the leaders of two streams of contemporary Islam resident in the UK a Qualitative rather than a Quantitative approach was considered the most appropriate. This would facilitate a focus upon the research subject's points of view and opinions. By adopting 'New Paradigm' Research methods the emphasis has been upon collaboration with the respondents, accepting and using minority perspectives [Robson: 1993. 3, 10].

The research is addressing the following questions:

1.2.1 How do leaders of contrasting Muslim emphases in Britain today describe their perspectives upon the status and devotion shown to Imam 'Ali?

1.2.2 How do such leaders of Twelver Shi'a and Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* streams understand facets of Imam 'Ali's ministry and personality e.g. as *Wali* [friend] of God, *Khilafah* successor] of the Prophet, and *Imam* [Prayer Leader and Teacher] of the Community?

1.2.3 How do religious leaders understand Imam 'Ali's designation as *Bab* [the Gate] to the 'City of Knowledge' i.e. the Prophet himself, and other supernatural qualities ascribed to him?

As a means to address these questions, the following possibilities presented themselves to me:

1.3 Interviews:

These would facilitate both flexibility and freedom of response, while still permitting particular questions to be addressed. Most importantly, since the concepts being explored are somewhat complex, it would be possible to probe, and to monitor the researcher's understanding of responses and to give to the informant opportunities to raise additional points of interest perhaps not previously considered by the researcher. Thus the interviews have been semi-structured, based upon a set of pre-prepared questions and prompts for the researcher to guide a developing sequence through the concepts and beliefs under examination [Robson: 1993. 229-330]. This is especially pertinent as the ideas under examination and discussion are expressed in Arabic and the respondents' primary language skills are invariably Arabic itself, Urdu, Punjabi, and Farsi. The major disadvantages have been, given the time scale for the study, that it has only been possible to interview a certain number of informants, which in turn has restricted the quality of the data. In addition, respondents have often expressed low confidence in their knowledge and use of English to convey complex religious terms. The researcher therefore has sought to develop his own knowledge of Arabic, Urdu and Farsi to be able to understand key concepts and expressions successfully in these languages, and to seek the presence of an interpreter for the actual interview sessions.

1.4 Questionnaires:

These would certainly have allowed for information to be retrieved from a much larger sample, and given time for respondents to offer a 'considered' reply. However, since the aim was to explore abstract concepts it has been felt that the data obtained might have been lacking in sufficient quantity, quality, depth and 'immediacy' of response. There would also have been no opportunity to probe or to discuss replies with informants. This option was therefore not pursued.

Given the advantages and disadvantages of these two options, it was decided that interviews were the most appropriate method by which to collect data for the reasons discussed above. A significant challenge has been the development of a schedule which was flexible enough to promote freedom of expression, whilst ensuring that sufficient depth and breadth of data could be gathered both to answer the research questions, and to allow for comparison between the replies. An entirely 'Open-Ended' Interview therefore seemed to be inappropriate. It may be argued that interviews are never wholly unstructured since a researcher's goal will always provide some focus. Consequently, it was decided to adopt the model of a 'Guided' semi-structured interview format which, whilst not anticipating answers and jeopardising freedom of response, would allow the researcher to obtain the required information, and to act as a 'reminder' so that areas of inquiry would not be omitted by accident [Atkins: 1984. 251-161].

Theoretically, it would have been feasible to employ both interviews and questionnaire methods. However, it was anticipated that interviews would be lengthy [usually one hour in length], and could generate large quantities of data [which proved to be the case]. Moreover, since the area of research is both complex, sensitive and personal the interview methodology as outlined seemed the most suitable to use. To combine the two methods for this piece of research could have led to a position where justice was done to neither. Consequently, in this work triangulation as a tool of inquiry has not been chosen.

1.5 Development of the Interview Schedule.

As no existing interview schedules from other research were available, it has been necessary to devise one.

This has involved:

1.5.1 Selection of key concepts in the devotion shown to, and the understandings of Imam 'Ali.

1.5.2 Identification of existing parameters and definitions about Imam 'Ali amongst Twelver Shi'a and Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* Muslims.

1.5.3 Development of 'model' examples to illustrate understandings of the Imam 'Ali in contrasting Muslim traditions historically and in contemporary expression.

It has been necessary to note carefully the nature of the planned questions so as to maximise the 'quality' of response and general ease for respondents' replies given their hesitations over English usage. An attempt has been made to devise 'open' questions, which allowed both for freedom of response as well as fluent expression of information. As much as possible, the questions have been sequenced in a logical manner so as to be clear and intelligible to the participants [Argyle: 1967. 63].

1.6 The Pilot Study.

The proposed interview schedule was discussed with the dissertation supervisors, one of whom is a Muslim adherent. Suggestions have been incorporated appropriately in the interview questions.

1.6.1.1 The Informants.

1.6.1.2 The Selection.

Since this is a Qualitative Study, it has been appropriate to choose a 'purposive' sample of 'key informants' i.e persons who are deemed suitable to the needs of the study. It has had to be acknowledged that with such a sample, no absolute claims of generalisation can be made.

The researcher's aim has been to find leaders of religious communities who could be expected to hold views, and to be aware of texts concerning the status and understanding of Imam 'Ali in their respective expressions of Islam today. From such a representative group it was proposed to elicit and contrast their perspectives, to trace the sources of such views against classic biographical studies of Imam 'Ali, and the *Hadith* and *Sunnah* of the Prophet. From this it was planned to trace and describe 'models' of understandings amongst Muslim emphases. It has been felt to be of interest to speculate as to whether, from within a variety of backgrounds and ideas a number of 'core' issues will emerge.

A sample should be large enough to be credible, yet small enough to allow for depth and breadth in the data collection [Bell: 1993. 82]. In view of a realistic time scale, the researcher has also felt it to be important for the sample and ensuing data to be capable of management. It was therefore decided to interview between twelve and fifteen informants representing each of the Muslim traditions under examination: Twelver-Shi'a and Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* [*Ahl i-Sunnat*] [People of the Prophet's Example]. It is acknowledged that the respondents are all male as it would have been inappropriate if not difficult for a male researcher to access female members of the Muslim communities for the research exercise. Consequently, this may seem to impose a limitation on the research conclusions, for example, on the understanding of the feminine dimension examined in chapter 2.8. The research aims however, were purposely directed to examine attitudes and perceptions about 'Ali amongst religious leaders of the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* and *Twelver Shi'a* traditions in Britain, who are male and accessible to the researcher.

The criteria for inclusion in the study have been:

1.6.1.2.1 Theological understanding and training in Muslim belief and doctrine.

1.6.1.2.2 Recognition as an Imam, or teacher in an Islamic context or holding the role of Chairman of a Mosque Committee.

1.6.1.2.3 The ability to verbalise thoughts, beliefs and experiences - possibly with the assistance of an interpreter.

1.6.1.2.4 The willingness to participate in the project.

1.6.1.2.5 To be completely unknown or currently, personally or professionally to the researcher. Such prior knowledge regarding the researcher's personal views might have tempted informants to offer what they perceived to be 'desired responses'.

1.6.1.3 Access.

The process of identifying suitable informants has initially been facilitated through the University of Derby, Religious Resource and Research Centre and its ancillary 'Multi-Faith Directory' [Weller: 1993/96] alongside its Website [multifaith.net.org.uk], together with the Centre for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham. Both institutions have 'nominated' potential respondents to the researcher. It is worthy of note however, that such informants can act as 'gatekeepers' controlling access and thereby possibly the information to be gained [Sapsford and Abbott: 1992. 114-115]. In the process of the current investigation, the researcher has discovered that initial respondents have acted as 'gateways' to other leaders of the respective traditions allowing a 'cascading' effect of approaches to a wider field of respondents and data. As respondents of the contrasting traditions are unaware of each other the risk of control of information has been considered negligible.

Once a potential informant was identified, telephone and letter contact were established, which enabled the researcher to gauge the suitability of the informant, such as his expertise, ability and willingness to communicate on the research project. It has been important to conceal the researcher's faith commitment to avert the risk of respondents providing 'socially desirable' responses.

Once the informant emerged as suitable and willing to participate, arrangements have been made to conduct the interview. In the researcher's experience, respondents have been unwilling to have their conversations tape-recorded. Invariably this has been due to expressed diffidence about the informant's command of English language. Consequently, brief notes have with the interviewee's permission been made in the course of the interview. A fuller record has then been made within 1/2 hour of the meeting with the full verbatim version being sent to the respondent for his signature as a true record of his responses and opinions.

1.6.1.4 Conducting the Interviews.

The process of asking and listening are highly determinative of the quality of the research itself. For example, attention to detail at the time, and subsequent critical appraisal of the conduct of the interviews, are essential contributions to the validity of the study [Cohen: 1976. 82].

1.6.1.5 Venues.

The interviews have taken place at the respective respondents' offices either at their mosque or academic institution. Whilst such situations might seem rather formal and controlled the main advantages have been that the informants have felt most at ease in familiar contexts. Invariably, refreshments were provided as a mark of hospitality, which eased any formality in the occasion. In addition, distractions such as telephone calls could be diverted for the requisite interview time.

1.6.1.6 Recording the data.

Since the interviews were potentially and proved to be lengthy and detailed, it was decided to ask permission to take appropriate notes by hand. Particular technical words in Arabic, Urdu or Farsi were noted for correct spelling.

1.6.1.7 Interviewing Techniques.

Both the interview schedule and the manner in which the questions are posed are important. Consequently, a key aim has been to ensure that the respondents did not feel that they were undergoing a form of 'test' especially in relation to command of English language [Johnson: 1984. 14-15].

To this end, non-verbal signals, which conveyed interest and encouragement were, employed such as, eye contact, nods and smiles with an 'open' posture. An objective here was to identify the researcher as a fellow 'disciple' rather than an 'expert'. This was deemed to be important when respondents have expressed diffidence on their fluency with English as their second or third language. This has caused some degree of anxiety amongst several respondents as they have mentioned their desire to be as accurate as possible in dealing with complex Qur'anic concepts and terms. Such an adopted attitude on the part of the researcher served as a reminder that the experience of being interviewed can be stressful for some informants [Powney, I & M: 1987. 128-140].

1.6.1.8 Social Factors.

As has already been indicated above, the quality of data obtained is positively related to the quality of the interaction between the respondent and researcher. Thus, whilst it was important to enable the interviewee to be at ease, it was also necessary to complete the objectives of the interview [Bell: 1993. 93-95].

On meeting the respondent therefore, it was courteous to seek afresh his permission to take brief notes in the interview, to reiterate the assurance of confidentiality, and as the sessions can last over an hour not to over tire the participants.

On completion of the formal interview, more personal and relaxed discussion has invariably taken place, and a letter of appreciation with the promised summary of the interview for signature sent to the informant within two days. Arrangements for distributing information to the interested parties will be made once the research has been completed and appraised.

1.6.1.8 Data Analysis.

The interviews are transcribed in full, editing removed irrelevant comments such as repetitions, interruptions and any diversions.

Analysis consists of searching the edited transcripts to identify response categories on the key issues of understanding Imam 'Ali's status, identity and role within representative Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* Sunni leaders in Britain. These concepts include Imam 'Ali as 'Friend of God' [*Wali*], his succession to the Prophet [*khilafah*] and his place as 'Gate to the City of Knowledge' [*Bab*]. The rigour with which the data is interpreted is crucial at this point. Researchers have developed lists of alternative criteria by which to assess the 'rigour' of this process and these have been utilised [Symon and Cassell: 1998. 7].

During this activity briefer, more focused categories have become noticeable, enabling data to be further clarified and themes to be identified. The objective at this stage of the research is to begin to identify and analyse a scale of theological perceptions of Imam 'Ali from the representatives of the two Muslim traditions under examination [Jones: 1985. 267ff].

1.6.2 Methodologies.

1.6.3 Argument for the Phenomenological Method:

A revised Phenomenological approach to Religious Studies has been adopted and followed in this dissertation. Arguably the most influential method in the study of religion in the 20th century [Hultkrantz: 1970], not only is it a significant methodology but many key issues in religious studies have been addressed and raised by scholars in this area.

The term *Religionsphenomenologie* was introduced initially by the Dutch scholar Pierre Daniel Chantepie de la Saussaye in *Lehrbuch der Religionschichte* [1887] referring to the varied types of religious phenomena. Essentially a 'descriptive' phenomenology, the method may be seen in the work of Eliade [1963;1969;1971] and Smart [1969;1997]. Such typologies would be inadequate for the present study as they lead to an account of religious phenomena by categorisation and discussion.

Husserl [Bowker: 1973. 169-170] provided a more complex development in this approach arguing that consciousness gives a foundation of knowledge of which there can be some certainty. Husserl's phenomenological method sought to forestall human presuppositions and interpretations in facing a new experience or encounter [Husserl: 1931. 26-27].

This, according to Husserl, can only be achieved by the use of 'a phenomenological *epoche*', a 'bracketing out' of all metaphysical questions and focusing upon the key phenomena of experience themselves. A related concept from Husserl which has also been utilised is 'eidetic vision', the capacity of the researcher to see beyond the particularities of a religious practice and belief and thereby to grasp its meaning without distortion and limitation.

Van der Leeuw [1933] offers the first systematic and thorough example of phenomenology in religious studies. Firstly, he argues the scholar of religion needs to classify religious phenomena into distinct categories. Secondly, comes the process of interpolating such phenomena into one's own life *einfuhlung* with the intention of understanding a religion from within. The third step is the key principle of *epoche*, the suspension of value judgements and the adoption of neutrality. A holistic understanding is to be gained fourthly, by clarifying the apparent structural relationships of the research evidence. Thus an understanding of how different aspects of a faith function together can be found. This leads according to Van der Leeuw to genuine *verstehen* [understanding] of what hitherto has been a chaotic and obstinate reality [Van der Leeuw: 1933. 676]. A sixth and final stage is the correlation of the research results with other disciplines' [eg anthropology, history, or philology] understandings of the object of the enquiry. The ideal is that by such an approach one can be as close as possible to being able to provide an 'understanding' of the 'meaning' of the religious phenomena under study and thus be able to relate this understanding to others.

1.6.4 Limitations of the Phenomenological Approach.

The aim of phenomenology as integral to the methodology of this Research instrument intends, in the researcher's perspective, to eschew all subjective input and to testify only to what has been observed. Intending to remove all that would mitigate an unbiased presentation of the facts:

> ...it desires to gain access to the facts themselves; and for this it requires a meaning, because it cannot experience the facts just as it pleases. This meaning however, is purely objective: all violence, either empirical, logical or metaphysical, is excluded...It has, in fact, one sole desire: to *testify* to what has

been manifested to it...'

[Van der Leeuw: 1933. 677-678].

Van der Leeuw has thus argued that, whilst phenomenology continually observes examples of religious experience it is not in a position to offer theological evaluations of events or statements of faith. To progress further would be to leave Religious Studies *per se* and to enter theology or philosophy.

There are however, other criticisms of this methodology. Firstly, because knowledge is generally gained subjectively in this approach with little reference to historical or cultural contexts, there is a corresponding lack of space for contrasting interpretations. Hence phenomenology is open to the charge of being authoritarian in its descriptions. Secondly, with the presupposed discipline of bracketing [*epoche*] one's assumption there is little said by phenomenologists on the achievement of this process. Their classifications of phenomena can equally be said to be Western and Christian focussed with Heiler [1961] using the concepts of God, revelation, and salvation, and Van der Leeuw [1933] using terms such as sacrifice, prayer and saviour. Using *epoche,* a researcher needs to be aware of and to acknowledge the extent to which personal presuppositions can be conditioned by received views [Flood: 1999. 102]. Previous experiences, gender consciousness, questions, doubts, scepticism and moral concerns can mould one's interpretation of another's perspective. A third criticism centres upon the use that phenomenologists put their method forwards with inclusivist goals. These can once more be presuppositions of a theological nature embracing how phenomena are named, positioned in a hierarchy of values, or seen in an unfolding pattern of salvation history. A related and fourth matter concerns the use of empathy as a toll to understand another person's life and faith perspective. It is feasible that in seeking to interpret another religious tradition the researcher may well use his or her sensitivities but could experience difficulties in setting aside personal history thereby shifting 'intuition' from a logical skill to a psychological process. A fifth question for the phenomenological method returns to its subjectivism and the way in which phenomenology may remove evidence out of its original context of time and place. Van der Leeuw himself sought to understand the data before him by empathising with his new knowledge but without noting seriously the context of the people and the material [Van der Leeuw: 1933]. Intrinsic sixthly, to the phenomenological method is the assumption that there are ideal types or essences in human consciousness and thus in religious identity. It is questionable whether there are such universal 'essences' common to the wide variety of life. When one emphasises the importance of context in understanding other perspectives it is not to deny there are examples of common meanings and phenomena of belief. To suggest that there are similarities of meaning for an 'essence' such as 'religion' or 'sacrifice' between different ways of faith can be to impose an understanding or pattern when the evidence does not merit it.

1.6.5 Advantages of the Phenomenological Method.

There are however, particular insights to be gained, utilised and developed as shall be demonstrated *infra* from the phenomenological approach. The manner and work of interpretation has for example, to begin in the life situation of the interpreter and to move from there. Moreover, symbols, ideas and activity will have significance to an 'insider' even if not so evidently to the 'outsider' of a particular faith. This meaning requires reconstruction which begins from the outsider-interpreter's own understanding. This is akin to a hermeneutic-interpretive model once released from the antecedent 'essences' and ideal type concepts. Secondly, the pattern of *epoche* is consistently important as a way to an impartial interpretation and description of a new religious phenomenon albeit self-awareness of one's presuppositions is also necessary. A third advantage of the phenomenological approach is the engagement by empathy with a new idea or practice. This is a practice familiar to the disciplines involved in psychotherapy where there is an implicit necessity to comprehend the vocabulary, grammar and emotional 'world' of the subject and awareness of the danger of projection and transference onto the subject of the researcher's own attitudes, ideas and emotions. In this case, it is emphatically important that it is the insiders' own words and activities, which are the source for comprehending the insiders' religious perspectives and *praxis*.

Once the researcher is conscious of the weaknesses of the phenomenological approach in its classical form it is possible to recognise its foundational advantages in the examination of a religious tradition in contrasting sub-streams or expressions. Waardenburg exemplifies this revised phenomenological method when he stresses the central issue of the 'intentionality' of the adherents of a religious tradition. Whereas the older generation of phenomenologists paid attention to textual accounts of religious activity, Waardenburg broadens the field of study into a religion to include cultural, social, and economic areas of life. The key to understanding what a religious statement for example, means to a believer is the intention, which has caused the formulation of the expression of faith. Empathy is as significant as ever in this approach:

> ...when we mention the possibility of an active self-involvement on the part of the researcher in the facts and meanings studied, the implication is that the researcher, even if only temporarily – as an actor one might say – takes the role of the people he studies.
>
> [Waardenburg: 1978. 110-111].

The ability to be aware and sensitive to others' understandings of the religious meanings of rituals and beliefs is akin to the social anthropologists' skill of 'participant observation'. Waardenburg goes on to seek the 'intention' of an activity within the particular religious tradition under examination. This is a development on from Husserl's creation of universal *eideia* and Van der Leeuw's 'ideal types' both of which were universalised categories. In addition, Waardenburg has emphasised the need to analyse how a religious belief or practice is expressed in specific social situations and to understand what those signs and symbols mean for the participants. This does involve engaging with and entering as fully as possible the religious 'world' of the community under study using methods close to Geertz's ethnographic approaches [Geertz: 1973]. It also includes the open acknowledgement by the researcher of his or her presuppositions rather than the idealistic 'bracketing' out of classical phenomenologists [Waardenburg: 1978. 130]. These innovations have been noted and used in addressing and investigating concepts such as *wali* 'friend of God', *shahid* 'martyr' and *imam* 'Imam of God' by seeking to enter the 'religious universe' of Twelver Shi'a adherents and Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* faithful in the British context.

1.6.6 Insider/Outsider Issue:

Pursuing this theme an important issue in contemporary religious studies and therefore, in this dissertation is the 'insider/outsider' problem [McCutcheon: 1998]. The question is raised whether an *outsider* researcher can fully comprehend the *insider* experience, as it will invariably be interpreted within the context of that *particular* individual history, environment, personality, and faith. Even those who experience the same event at the same time will [due to their contrasting histories and contexts] interpret that event or experience in differing ways. Personal apprehensions are always in some profound sense *personal* and thus inaccessible to others. Arguably, there is however a distinct advantage to being such an *outsider*. Secondly, it is equally arguable that there is an advantage to being an outsider as members of a faith community may be unaware of pressures and conditions used to accept a particular understanding of their belief and practice. The outsider is in a significant position of not being influenced by such means and thus able to maintain objectivity. Whilst there is undoubtedly a value to scholarly detachment and the researcher may gain considerable knowledge of the history, texts, philosophy, structure and social implications of a faith tradition not to have grasped it from within may still be a vulnerability.

Thus, bearing these issues in mind *empathy* and *imagination* are important scholarly attributes and skills in allowing comprehension of contrasting worldviews [Wach: 1951. 90-98 and Partridge: 1998. 115-129].

1.6.7 Participant Observation and the Importance of 'Thick Description'.

Whilst in this research acknowledgement is made of the significance of more traditional methods of religious studies such as, for example, philological skills, it is also recognised that all symbols, including words, draw their meanings from their total context. Anthropologists have stressed the importance of 'participant observation' with its theme of developing insider awareness of the faith communities under examination. Furthermore Geertz has developed 'interpretive anthropology' which aims to interpret beliefs and actions as the insider would within his/her community [Geertz: 1973]. This interpretation is only feasible according to Geertz when the researcher works as a participant observer. Consequently, 'Thick' description becomes possible when not only can a person's actions are described but also, as far as possible, what the person *thinks* they are doing can be described.

The imperative and rationale for fieldwork within this investigation stems from the contrast between the beliefs of religious leaders within the two expressions of contemporary Islam in the UK which have been studied and official versions of belief concerning Imam 'Ali ibn Abu Talib. It might be expressed as an examination of the contrast, if there be any, between 'Official Religion' and 'Folk Religion'. Yoder describes folk religion as:

> ...the totality of all those views and practices of religion that exist among people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion.
>
> [Yoder: 1974. 14].

The terms 'theological and liturgical' can be replaced by 'philosophical and ritual'. Yoder's definition is based upon the term 'religiose Volkskunde', which he translates as '...the folk-cultural dimension of religion, or the religious dimension of folk-culture' [Yoder: 1974. 14]. Originally developed in 1901 by Drews whose primary concern was to examine religious folklife for young German Lutheran ministers to face the beliefs of rural congregations whose understandings of the Christian faith could be radically different from orthodox University theological expressions. In Drews' situation the concept of 'folk-religion' came from a desire 'to narrow the gap between pulpit and pew' [Yoder: 1974. 3]. The contention is that an account of a devotional practice, which does not take into account the element of 'folk' belief risks relating less than the whole story and that phenomenological fieldwork is often the sole method of gathering such information. Certainly, in this study the necessity of gathering information in this way has been borne in upon the researcher.

Researchers in religious studies invariably describe 'religion' as the officially received expression given in terms of theology or philosophy or ritual i.e the *ulama* provided version. The non-*ulama* faithful will also have their own versions of their religious tradition, which may not accord with the 'official' tradition yet nonetheless they remain 'religious' and 'committed'. Freeman indicates:

> ...The personal system of faith may elevate the unsanctioned objects of belief to at least the same level as the sanctioned ones and draw them coherently together has either been ignored or is obliterated by the definitions of religion in use.
>
> [Freeman: 1978. 121].

Smart says that 'to understand human history and human life it is necessary to understand religion' [Smart: 1977. 11]. Arguably, to comprehend religion it is also essential to understand the links between 'official', 'folk' and 'personal' beliefs and devotional practices. In religion there can be divergences between official theological statements and actual popular practice, as people may not behave in exact and similar patterns. Consequently, it can be creative to assess a religious practice and set of statements by being aware of three fundamental components – the official/*ulama* perspective, the folk/popular view, and the personal dimension. The official is focused mainly upon the transmission and development of the theological-philosophical and ritual aspects and is that area which receives considerable attention. Whilst the individual element is each person's understanding of religion and that part it plays in his or her life.

In examining both a doctrinal perspective upon the role of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib and those spiritualities that draw upon him, the line of the Imamate, and Sunni Sufi understandings which embrace him and his descendants, it is necessary to appreciate how these 'official', 'folk' and 'personal' elements interact with each other.

In examining official/*ulama* religion there is an established form to it but equally it is not entirely static in nature. Notions of faith and belief can evolve or be modified. If is discarded it may still continue within the folk realm. By reverse order popular devotion or belief can gain official approbation. There is consequently a creative interplay between approved belief and impermissible practices. At a personal level faith may be a combination of the official level of teaching and concepts with individual interpretations. Thus, personal belief will emerge from the received tradition as given by, in this instance the *ulama* and individual reflection, personal experience and circumstance, and family or peer influences. There can therefore be some diversity and variation of religious belief. However, there is a tendency towards concentration on homogeneity in religion and the strengthening of unity especially when a religious tradition experiences threat and oppression or understands itself as representing truth in an exclusivist manner.

This will return the focus to phenomenology as a method in Religious Studies. In investigating forms of a spirituality which focus upon a charismatic figure such as ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib there are both official propositional and folk/popular beliefs as well as personal attitudes. Bleeker states that phenomenology of religion,

> ...must begin by accepting as proper objects of study all phenomena that are professed to be religious.
>
> [Bleeker: 1971. 16].

There is inevitably a descriptive aspect to the study of a devotional practice and its undergirding theological-philosophical and ritual dimensions. We are not debating the reality of the person who is the object of the devotion because the personal experience of the devotees has the status of fact in these instances. Sharpe quotes Kristensen saying:

> Let us never forget that there exists no other religious reality then the faith of the believer.
>
> [Kristensen: 1954. 27 in Sharpe: 1986. 228].

Phenomenology is not merely descriptive but a significant methodological tool if we are to reach a realistic and insightful perspective on religion as it is lived. It is also feasible to take account of religion in terms of three fundamental elements. Firstly, *Official Religion:* accepted orthodoxy at a given time, which is liable to change. Secondly, *Folk Religion:* generally accepted and transmitted belief and practice, regardless of the official view. And thirdly, *Personal Religion:* a fusing of received tradition with personal beliefs and interpretations. As such, the use of a 'revised phenomenological' method is invaluable in as judgement-free description of religious beliefs and activities as is possible.

1.6.8.1 Historical method.

The precise definition and use of a historical method in the study of religious traditions is closely linked with the practice of philology and a factual-descriptive exposition, with the minimum of interpretation as to the significance of the evidence derived.

Certainly, it is essential that in dealing with two religious expressions within Islam there will be a plurality of understandings of concepts, contrasting historical developments, and differing historical contexts to be examined. These cannot be adequately understood without a thorough historical study of their origins, growth and key personalities, which will be affected by the ongoing dynamic of continuity, change, interaction and conflict.

In the examination of devotion to Imam ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib amongst Twelver Shi’a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama’at* traditions regard has been given to the historical evolution of the respective expressions from the first to the thirteenth centuries AH. Examination has also been made of the Shi’a evolution and the distinctive *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama’at* development during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries under British rule in north India and thence in Britain after migration. The historical method however, has been kept to a limited role as its approach can be described as non-normative, that is to say, it seeks to describe and investigate facts, whether historically or systematically, without assessing them from a theological and philosophical manner.

However, the study of religion is less one particular discipline than a field of studies with a firm interdisciplinary character [Waardenburg: 1973]. Hence it is essential to deploy amongst the other methodologies discussed the necessity of the historical approach as the dissertation must examine the roots of devotion to the Imam in contrast with contemporary practices.

1.6.8.2 Sociological Method.

A theme in this dissertation is an examination of the interaction of the two Muslim traditions under investigation and the surrounding British society. Consequently, sociological methods of research may be expected to have been utilised in the research process. The basic premise of a sociological approach to an issue concerns the social structuring and construction of human experience and the surrounding culture, which will include religious belief and activity. Practices, knowledge and institutions are seen by sociologists as the creations of human interaction and community construction. As such religion is a product of human communal creativity and construction. In the social world, beliefs, rituals, moral values, and religious leadership patterns gain power or are subject to greater powers.

In examining such aspects of a religious tradition therefore, a sociological method examines how religious practice interacts with or is influenced by its surrounding society with its institutions, classes and groups, and ideologies. Religious traditions and groups are also microcosms of the larger society and therefore offer examples of society in which relationships, processes and human activities may more easily be observed than in the large scale and diverse society.

This focus on social construction and human activity is arguably a weakness of this approach to the study of religious traditions. It does not address the power of religious rituals and thus the motivations of adherents to face deprivation or martyrdom for their faith. Critics of the sociological method will also indicate its anti-religious tendencies as it replaces religious narratives and practices with sociological narratives of social order and deviance and with explanations of the causes of human behaviour with sociological constructions of social forces [Milbank: 1990. & Flanaghan: 1995]. Thus, personal testimony from a religious believer relating to the inspiration and significance for example, of a martyr's attitude towards suffering may be downplayed by sociology's methodological atheism to the divine.

In the context of this study however, sociological approaches whilst not predominant in the methodology are contained with the Interpretive Approach, which is acknowledged as a key tool of investigation [Jackson: 1997]. Moreover, sociology of religion has focussed upon the interaction between belief and community and social forces and processes from the wider surrounding society as well as noting the importance of the worldviews of religious traditions which do influence national identities. Thus it has been helpful to acknowledge with sociological insights how religious traditions especially Muslims in minority situations in the UK look for sociological legitimisation of their religious freedom.

1.6.8.3 Interpretive Method.

The process of this dissertation has included the development of understanding the concepts, symbols, beliefs and rituals of 'insiders' within two Muslim traditions and that of the researcher as an 'outsider' with his vocabulary. This in Geertz's perspective is in fact the essence of an anthropological exercise, which lies in creating a relationship between what he terms 'experience near' and 'experience distant' concepts.

> An experience-near concept is, roughly, one that someone – a patient, a subject, in our case an informant – might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others. An experience-distant concept is one that specialists of one sort or another – an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist – employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims.
>
> [Geertz: 1983. 57].

Geertz is concerned to offer an analysis of concepts that are for 'insiders' 'experience-near' with sufficient clarity so they can be placed:

> ...in illuminating connection with experience-distant concepts theorists have fashioned to capture the general features of social life.'
>
> [Geertz: 1983. 58].

In this 'interpretive' ethnographic method this is not achieved with a process of empathy but rather by being aware of the means with which the subjects of the research see 'with' or 'through':

> The ethnographer does not, and, in my opinion, largely cannot, perceive what his informants perceive. What he perceives, and that uncertainly enough, is what they perceive 'with' – or 'by means of', or 'through'...or whatever the word should be.
>
> [Geertz: 1983. 58].

Geertz is cautious of the capacity of researchers to empathise fully with insiders of a religious community and proposes a pattern of analysing words, forms, institutions and modes of behaviour with which people represent themselves to themselves and to one another. The process of empathy, he feels can be an accommodation of a concept to a Western idea or model, which is alien or unhelpful removes the original from its own setting. This is a form of hermeneutics with the analysis of gathered evidence providing a sense of the 'culture' as a whole through its many aspects, and gaining understanding of each element by relating it to the whole.

At this point for example, Social Science becomes not so much an epistemology as an hermeneutic, or an empirically rooted epistemology has become a hermeneutic epistemology. Geertz comments

> ...many social scientists have turned away from a laws and instances ideal of explanation toward a cases and interpretations one..
>
> [Geertz: 1980. 165].

In this sense, knowledge should not be understood simply in relation to a known object but rather in terms of an intimate relationship between the knower and the known, as the two are closely bound together. The object under examination cannot easily be isolated from the researcher and that person's own consciousness and self-understanding. Thus there comes a breaking down of traditional subject boundaries with 'knowing' taking place not 'outside' the subject but 'within' the relationship between the object of the study and the researcher.

Although there are elements that differ there are similarities between Geertz's approach and that of Waardenburg's revision of phenomenology. The former's perspective is considerably broader than Waardenburg's specific focus upon religion. Common to both however, is the use of hermeneutic ideas and the use of individual experience and a wider system of meanings to interpret personal as well as communal experiences. Consequently, whilst one may be sceptical about the effectiveness of empathy with 'insiders' perspectives but a form of it is a valuable tool for interpretation of 'insider' concepts. Waardenburg is concerned that the researcher should be able to,

> ...not only to receive different impressions on different levels, but also to digest them adequately in order that he may arrive at an understanding of them.
>
> [Waardenburg: 1978. 111].

The 'Interpretive' method as drawn from anthropology has some valuable insights and skills, which ameliorate the admitted weaknesses of a traditional phenomenological approach. It has in itself vulnerabilities, the projection of the researcher's subjective experience on to the subjects, the possible disregarding of the 'insiders'' voices, and unwarranted creation of 'whole' perspectives from individual's experiences. In this study, the researcher has sought to utilise a revised *Phenomenological* approach with insights from an *Interpretive* method by listening to individuals in the context of their participation and belonging to their wider religious tradition; and by acknowledging personal presuppositions and allowing the 'insider' to interpret their self-awareness and understanding as clearly and authentically as possible. This latter process involves the comparing and contrasting of the researcher's own language and experience with that of the insider as much as examining the relationship between the insider's beliefs and practice of faith with the symbols, concepts and rituals of the wider religious tradition within which they belong.

This revised approach and methodology includes the recognition that no clear 'objective' or reified knowledge of religious traditions may be totally attainable. The process of 'understanding' religious practice and experiences may well reflect both the opinions and perspectives of the adherents and those of the researcher. Here we are confronted by the difficulties, already noted, of methodological agnosticism and neutrality. The proposition is that the researcher in seeking to understand 'the other' is required in some sense to adopt the identity of the other. This may be based upon the models suggested by Panikkar [1979] and Krieger [1991]. Following Panikkar's method, which involves his acknowledgement of an identity comprised of two 'others', the Christian and the Hindu [Krieger: 1991. 45]. Krieger outlines his model with an inter-religious dialogue purpose in mind but one, which is equally adaptable in academic research. It offers a seven-fold pattern:

1. Research begins with what Krieger terms 'reliable methods' embracing empirical, historico-critical, philosophical and phenomenological to assess critically the researcher's own tradition.
2. The same critical tools are applied to the tradition[s] under examination.
3. Understanding of this tradition becomes conviction as much as the researcher is committed to his or her own tradition.
4. This allows an internal intra-religious dialogue to take place within the researcher him/herself, which is marked by the discovery of a common language capable of 'expressing the truth of both religions'.

5. The internal dialogue becomes externalised when the researcher's interpretation is offered to the representative[s] of the other tradition.
6. The same pattern of stages can be presupposed for those the researcher is seeking to understand.
7. The new understandings are tested in the dialogic process between the traditions. If they are found to be inadequate, the researcher will return to the intra-religious dialogue afresh.

For research methodologies intended to examine contrasting cultures and beliefs, the research method continues positively once contracts of understanding have been established between the researcher and the tradition under examination. This involves dialogue between the researcher and the subject or partner in the process. Both parties to the research exercise are therefore, invited to become more transparent to open another. Such a method affirms what anthropologists, ethnologists and empirical researchers in religious studies have always affirmed that reliable studies of a contrasting tradition or community will best emerge after the researcher has had lengthy contact with the people under study. What is involved here however, is not only the time and commitment invested in the research but also the epistemological process of discovering the other in oneself. Ultimately, there will be a span of time when the distinction between the researcher and the researched becomes blurred if not transparent. This is where Panikkar's dialogic emphases and Krieger's fourth stage of finding a 'common language' and discovery of 'myself' in the 'other self' are important. This admittedly presumes a religious or spiritual conviction on the part of the researcher but with a researcher, who does not hold such a perspective the results

Chapter 2.

The Position of 'Ali in Sunni and Shi'a understandings from the first to the thirteenth centuries AH.

2.1 The Position of 'Ali.

2.1.1 'Ali ibn Abu Talib.

Tradition maintains that 'Ali was born c. 599 inside the Ka'ba in Mecca. Early in his childhood, Muhammad received him into his household to relieve his father Abu Talib from financial pressure. 'Ali was certainly one of the first and Shi'i tradition affirms that he was the first male at ten years old to believe Muhammad's message and mission [Jordac: n.d. 38], [Chirri: 1982. 56]. The honour of being the first person to accept the Prophet's message is normally given to his wife Khadijah. Whether he was second after her or third after Khadijah and Abu Bakr has been an issue of debate between Sunni and Shi'i but it is usually resolved by the agreement that Khadijah was the first woman, Abu Bakr the first amongst adult men and 'Ali the first amongst children to receive the message. Firmly loyal to his cousin, one tradition asserts that 'Ali occupied the Prophet's bed to deceive conspirators as Muhammad left Mecca for Medina in the *Hijrah.* 'Ali rejoined the Prophet sometime later and subsequently married his daughter Fatima. Of their marriage two sons were born, Hasan and Husayn. During the lifetime of Fatima, 'Ali married no other wife.

2.1.2 Relationship to the Prophet.

Very early in his prophethood, Muhammad had gathered his relatives together and asked 'Which of you then will help me in this, and be my brother, my executor and

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my successor amongst you?' At that time only 'Ali who was thirteen is said to have declared his support 'O Prophet of God, I will be thy helper in this.'

The Prophet then said

> 'This is my brother, my executor and my successor among you. Hearken unto him, and obey him'. The men rose to their feet, laughing and saying to Abu Talib: 'He hath ordered thee to hearken unto thy son and to obey him'.
>
> [Lings: 1991. 50-51].

Rumi interprets this command about 'Ali being the *mawla* of the Prophet as clear and it became a vital part of the theology of authority and guidance in Sufism. Rumi states that the Prophet called upon 'Ali:

> 'When everyone seeks to draw near to God by some sort of devotional act, you seek the nearness of God by companionship with his wise and special servant, so that among everyone you may be the first near him.'
>
> [Mathnawi I. 2958. And 2959 – 2956].

Rumi says that Imams may be from the line of either 'Ali or Umar - he does not analyse the issue in depth but dwells upon the qualities of *wilaya* – nearness to God and virtue.

During the Prophet's lifetime, 'Ali participated in almost all the community's military expeditions, often as standard bearer but only twice as commander [at Fadak: 6/628 and in the Yemen: 10/632] thereby playing a significant role in the subjugation of the

Arabian peninsular to Islam. The courage he displayed was to become legendary in the popular imagination. After the Prophet's death however, "Ali took no further part in military action for unknown reasons [Vaglieri: 1962: 1960. 381]. Nonetheless several exploits are attributed to him at the battle of the "Camel" in 36/656 and at Siffin in 37/657 when 'Ali was sixty years of age. Alongside these military activities, 'Ali also served as one of the Prophet's secretaries, and occasionally acted in a diplomatic function. On two occasions he was appointed to destroy idols, acted as executioner of enemies condemned to death by the Prophet, and with al-Zubayr supervised the massacre of the Banu Qurayza in 5/627. At Mina in 9/631 'Ali read to the assembled pilgrims the first seven verses of Surah 9 *Bara'at* [Immunity]. Following the Prophet's death, 'Ali remained apart from the election process which appointed Abu Bakr as caliph [11/632 - 13/634]. With him stayed Talha and al-Zubayr and several other Companions [*muhajirun*] to watch over the Prophet's body and to prepare it for burial. At this point 'Ali made no attempt to maintain control of the Muslim community within Hashemite hands although it is alleged that al-Abbas ibn Abd al-Muttalib [d.32/652] the Prophet's uncle and Abu-Sufyan one of the last converts to Islam prior to the Prophet's triumphal return to Mecca in 9/630 urged him to do so. When the group who initially had abstained from recognising Abu Bakr as caliph gradually accepted his election, 'Ali [al-Minqari:1382/1962. 163] maintained his refusal for a further six months. The *Kitab al-Saffina* of Abu Bakr al-Johanna relates that 'Umar took Ali to Abu Bakr. There 'Ali declined to swear allegiance to Abu Bakr arguing that he had a stronger claim to the caliphate. Abu Ubayda attempted to persuade 'Ali to change his position on the grounds that Abu Bakr was older and more experienced than he was and moreover that if 'Ali were to survive him, he would be most worthy to succeed due to his blood relationship with the Prophet. 'Ali however, stressed that the authority of Muhammad should not be removed from the Prophet's household. An issue of inheritance complicated the delay; Fatima as the Prophet's daughter had laid claim to the land held by her father. Abu Bakr had rejected this assertion on the basis of the Prophetic Hadith that "Prophets have no heirs" [al-Baladhuri: 1959.30 & ibn Hanbal.1313/1895. VI. 262]. The question of whether or not 'Ali hoped to succeed his father-in-law at once is contentious and an issue of profound historical and contemporary debate between Sunni and Shi'i. The Shi'i traditions have always insisted that it was the Prophet's wish to transmit the succession to 'Ali, but it is certain that in his last and possibly unexpectedly final illness he did not express this desire clearly.

2.1.3 The Establishment of the Caliphate: relationship with the first three Caliphs.

Abu Bakr, elected as caliph cannot have expected to rule as such for any length of time. Traditional narratives of Abu Bakr's selection as caliph relate that 'Ali was with Fatima his wife engaged in preparing the Prophet for burial. Both refused to offer allegiance to Abu Bakr, which only with reluctance did 'Ali perform after Fatima's death six months later. Lings relates:

> After the death of Fatima some six months later, 'Ali said to Abu Bakr: 'We know well thy pre-eminence and what God has bestowed upon thee, and we are not jealous of any benefit that He hath caused to come to thee. But thou didst confront us with a thing accomplished, leaving us with no choice, and we felt that we had some claim therein for our nearness of kinship unto the Messenger of God'. The Abu Bakr's eyes filled with tears and he said, 'By Him in whose hand is my soul, I had rather that all should be well between me and the kindred of God's Messenger than between me and my own kindred'; and at noon that day in the Mosque he publicly exonerated 'Ali for not having recognised him as caliph, whereupon 'Ali affirmed the right of Abu Bakr and pledged his allegiance to him.

[Lings: 1997. 347].

By contrast, 'Ali's account reads differently. In *Nahj ul Balagha* it is related:

> Abu Bakr dressed himself with it [the caliphate] and he certainly knew my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand mill.

Thus 'Ali,

> ...put a curtain against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it...I watched the plunder of his inheritance till the first one went his way...

['Ali ibn Abu Talib: 1984. Sermon 3. 105].

Abu Bakr in turn appointed 'Umar ibn al- Khattab [13/634 - 23/644] as his successor. According to tradition, 'Ali was a valued counselor to each of the Caliphs who preceded him but 'Ali's supporters certainly felt that the nomination and 'election' had been arranged without genuine consultation [Zakaria: 1988. 48]. 'Umar included 'Ali in his Council of Six, which he seems to have seen as presumptuous:

> It is strange that during his [Abu Bakr] lifetime he wished to be released from the caliphate but he confirmed it for the other one after his death. No doubt these two shared its udders strictly among themselves. This one put the Caliphate in a tough enclosure where the utterance was haughty and the touch was rough. Mistakes were in plenty and so also the excuses therefore...Nevertheless, I remained patient despite length of period and stiffness of trial, till when he went his way [of death] he put the matter [of Caliphate] in a group and regarded me to be one of them. But good heavens! What had I to do with this 'consultation'? Where was any doubt about me with regard to the first of them that I was now considered akin to these ones?

[‘Ali ibn Abu Talib: 1984. Sermon 3. 105-106]

Whilst he may have been consulted on legal matters in the light of his knowledge of the Qur’an and the Sunnah it is questionable whether his counsel would have been sought by ‘Umar on political issues. In fact, during the respective caliphates of Umar and Uthman, ‘Ali held neither political nor military office except the guardianship of Medina during ‘Umar’s absence in Palestine and Syria [al-Tabari: 1. 2402, 2522]. There is also received tradition that ‘Ali, on being questioned by Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf in the Council of Six whether he was committed to follow together with the Qur’an and the Sunnah the work of the preceding caliphs, he gave an evasive answer. ‘Ali responded affirmatively to the first but negatively to the second saying that he would follow his own judgement [Zakaria: 1988. 54].

‘Uthman answered both positively and was appointed as caliph. During the caliphate of Uthman [23/644 - 35/656], ‘Ali with other Companions such as Talha ibn ‘Abd Allah and al-Zubayr ibn Bakkar frequently accused the caliph of deviating from the Qur’an and the Prophet’s Sunnah especially in the application of *hudud*. ‘Ali insisted on the responsibility of applying the divine law and was one of those who demanded that the legal punishment for drinking alcohol should be carried out upon the viceroy of Kufa, al-Walid ibn Ukba.

Some accounts relate that he carried out the whipping himself. With Abd al-Rahman ibn Awf, ‘Ali charged Uthman with *bida* [innovation] such as making four *ra’kas* [prayer cycles] at Arafat and Mina.

On the issue of political matters, 'Ali sided with 'Uthman's critics and was recognized by them as one of, if not their actual leader. An example would be when Abu Dar al-Ghifari who had protested against the injustices perpetrated by the powerful was exiled from Medina, 'Ali and his sons went to acknowledge him on his departure despite 'Uthman's prohibition of any such action. This created further dispute with the caliph. A second example was the rebel approach to Uthman from Egypt, 'Ali was at least one of their intermediaries [al-Tabari: I. 2969]. When these rebels returned to Medina later they asked 'Ali to become their leader [al-Tabari. I.2965] but he refused whilst there are reasons to suggest that he was sympathetic to them in their demand for the caliph's abdication. Madelung [1997. 142-143] affirms that alongside 'Ali's nascent candidature for the caliphate there was support for Talha as a prominent companion to succeed Uthman. The third caliph was murdered on the Friday and by the following day 19 Dhul Hijjah 35/18 June 656 'Ali was certainly acclaimed as caliph. Reliable tradition states that Talha and al-Zubayr did not give their allegiance willingly. There was a sufficiently intimidating mood however, in Medina to coerce them into pledging loyalty. There is no reason however, to include 'Ali in the bloody conclusion to the conflict with Uthman albeit Petersen considers that 'Ali's election owed some support to the circles behind 'Uthman's assassins [Petersen: 1964. 10].

2.1.4 Succession to the Caliphate and rule.

When 'Ali succeeded to the caliphate, numbered amongst his supporters were those known to have been hostile to the previous government on economic issues such as al-Ashtar, ibn al-Kawwa', Sa'sa'a and others [al-Masudi: IV 261; al-Tabari: I. 2916, 2908].

Indeed, 'Ali seems to have been declared as caliph by 'such Muslims as were present in the city' as 'the most respected Muslim in Medina' [Watt: 1968. 36]. Watt adds that 'it could be said that in Medina in 35/656 'Ali was so clearly the best that no consultation was needed'. The account in *Nahj ul Balagha* presents 'Ali has having little political ambition at all in respect to the caliphate. This seems to be more accurately a hagiographical device which contradicts 'Ali's earlier public hesitations and resistance to the elections of Abu Bakr and his two successor.

> I had no liking for the caliphate nor any interest in government, but you [he was addressing Talhah and Zubayr] invited me to it.
>
> ['Ali ibn Abu Talib: 1984. Sermon 3]

Al-Bukhari reports 'Ali saying 'I am only an ordinary person' [Bukhari: n.d. 57.6 no 20].

Finally however, 'Ali was elected as caliph. 'Ali's own plans in the face of the various financial demands put forward by the *mukatila* [division of the surplus revenues and lands] are unknown. It is simply recorded that on becoming caliph, 'Ali distributed the entire amount found in the *Bayt al-mal* [treasury] in Medina, Basra and Kufa together with all the provisions collected in the *bayt al-ta'am* treasury [Caetani: 1905-1926. 276-280]. This is not to be seen as an imperial gesture but as a consequence of the opinion he had earlier expressed to Umar.

'Ali is also said to have wished to distribute the *Sawad* [lands in Iraq] but restrained this proposal in case of legal disputes emerging. Excepting those moves, there is no evidence that 'Ali adopted extremist views. In fact his actions demonstrate the contrary perspective. He was opposed to the *Saba'iyya* , the followers of 'Abd Allah ibn Saba [Momem: 1985. 46], distancing himself from them when they exalted him beyond proper bounds. ."During 'Ali's caliphate however, he was banished by 'Ali to Mada'in on account of his saying to 'Ali 'Thou art God'. According to many accounts moreover, 'Ali even caused some of the followers of ibn Saba to be banished [al-Kashshi: 1899. 48]. As soon as circumstances allowed, 'Ali separated himself from the *nuffar,* those who had besieged and attacked Uthman [al-Tabari I. 3163-5, 3182]. For by his utter devotion to Islam 'Ali was driven to give an absolute prior claim in merit to priority of conversion to the Faith above nobility of birth in the Meccan aristocracy, or to political or administrative abilities. In his conflicts with the preceding caliphates he had constantly appealed to the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, which he considered were being neglected. It is contentious whether by this theological purist policy or by an aim to restrict the caliphate to the Hashemite house, 'Ali was inevitably going to face the principle which extended this right to the whole of the Prophet's people. Thus, although he set the *Quraysh* against him; in exchange he had the support of the *Ansar* [the earliest 'helpers' in Medina], of the other non-Quraysh tribes who had been amongst the first believers, of the *mukatila* in the newly conquered provinces, and the depressed classes in general. However, the irregular election of 'Ali to the caliphate rendered the *Ummah* now divided into three factions. Besides his own supporters, 'Ali faced the Ummayyads and their clients who had come to regard the caliphate as their distinct property through the nepotism of Uthman, whilst the Quraysh formed a third grouping with their hope to restore their reign on principles established by Abu Bakr and Umar [Madelung: 1997. 146-147]. Petersen describes a similar configuration of competing groups at the outset of 'Ali's caliphate between the Prophet's Meccan and Medinan associates, the Umayyad patriarchate in Mecca, the Arabian Bedouin communities, and the followers of the Prophet's own lineage with 'Ali as their focus of respect [Petersen: 1964.9]

2.1.5 Conflict with the Umayyad family and assassination

Following 'Uthman's assassination, the Umayyad family as well as leading Qurayshites left Medina leaving the opposition in control of the city and the situation in general. As 'Ali was the person for whom they had most regard, he was invited to succeed to the caliphate. As noted above, traditions on the event, and the manner and circumstances of the succession contradict each other on his willingness to accept the nomination.

The commonly accepted date is 19 Dhul l'Hijja 35/18 June 656 with his most ardent followers being prepared to use violence against those who refused to recognise him. Whilst the vast majority of Muslims in Medina accepted the succession together with most of the empire's provinces, there were some who would not adhere and left Medina. These included Abd Allah ibn Umar, Sa'ad ibn Abi Wakkas, al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba, Muhammad ibn Maslama al-Ansari, Usma ibn Zayd. As a result Mu'awiya in Damascus was enabled to maintain that the election was invalid because it had been mooted by a minority.

In fact, it was two surviving members of the Council of Six, Talha and Zubayr, who persuaded 'Ali to accept the caliphate affirming that only he could save 'the caliphate from disintegration' [Zakaria: 1988. 56]. 'Ali's response was that the right of election went to those in Medina at the time who were *Ansar, Muhadjirun* [migrants from Mecca on Hijrah], and Badr veterans. What is possible is that 'Ali had allowed himself to be nominated by those ultimately responsible for the murder of Uthman, which in turn opened him to the charge of complicity in the crime. This was a strategic error although some traditions show him seeking to remove from his supporters these most factious groups [Momem: 1985.24]. Ibn Abbas counseled 'Ali to move gradually in implementing reforms of decisions and nepotistic appointments made by Uthman but he moved at once to replace his predecessor's provincial governors with his own nominees, distributing monies with equity. However, reports of 'Ali's alleged involvement in 'Uthman's murder was already provoking strong reaction in Mecca, Damascus and Egypt with refusals to give homage *ba'ya* to him. It was a more immediate revolt that now preoccupied 'Ali leaving Mu'awiya in Syria to bide his time.

Although Ai'sha [618-56/678], the Prophet's youngest wife and daughter of Abu Bakr, had gone on pilgrimage from Medina to Mecca during the unrest and attack on Uthman, she had supported opposition against the third caliph. On her return from Mecca, she was equally opposed to the election of 'Ali and engaged herself in active resistance to the new regime.

Four months later she was joined by Talha ibn 'Ubayd Allah [d. 36/656] and al-Zubayr ibn al-'Awwam [d. 36/656], forming within a short period an army to march into Iraq to find additional forces and resources for their revolt. For 'Ali to lose this province would open the way to the loss of other eastern regions, and a possible alliance of Syria, Egypt and Mu'awiya against him.

The insurgents proclaimed that the *hukum* legal rule should be re-established for all equally and that a *Islam* reform should also be put into effect [al-Tabari:1879-1901. I, 3093, 3131, 3132]. Paradoxically, these three dissentients, Talha, al-Zubayr, and Ai'sha were in part responsible for 'Uthman's death and thus their rising to seek revenge for him, and the meaning they attached to their move are complex and obscure. Ai'sha had long been jealous of 'Ali, whilst Talha and al-Zubayr, two prominent companions of the Prophet realised that their opportunities of succeeding to the caliphate were now extremely limited. Social, economic and political motives would seem to indicate the real causes for their action.

Basra was occupied by the insurgents and massacred many of the *nuffar* there. 'Ali sought assistance from Kufa and then with an adequate force set out to confront the uprising. Both parties aimed for a peaceful conclusion to the episode and an agreement was negotiated which involved 'Ali's disengagement from the *nuffar,* whilst guaranteeing their lives. Extremists in 'Ali's party however, had intended another ending to the matter. A minor confrontation between the two armies resulted in the full-scale 'Battle of the Camel' [10 Djumada 36/4 December 656] in which Talha and al-Zubayr were killed and Ai'sha was summarily returned to Medina under escort.

Following this initial success, 'Ali now hoped for renewed allegiance from Mu'awiya, Governor of Syria. Such hopes were not to be fulfilled as Mu'awiya citing S 17. 33-35 demanded the surrender of 'Uthman's assassins.

> Nor take life - which God has made sacred - except. Nor just cause. And if anyone is slain wrongfully, We have given his heir authority [to demand *Qisas* or to forgive] : but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life; for he is helped [by the Law]

This forbade the killing of anyone except in a just cause [*illa bi'l-hakk*] whilst at the same time according the right of vengeance in the case of anyone murdered unjustly [*mazluman*] to his/her *weal* [i.e. close relative]. In maintaining that Uthman had been unjustly murdered, Mu'awiya claimed the right to exercise revenge as accorded by God. In the interim, he would withhold allegiance to 'Ali as caliph. The traditions pass vaguely over the thesis put forward and held by 'Ali in rejecting Mu'awiya's demand, except for the explicit statement in the *Wak'at Siffin* of Nasr ibn Muzahim al-Minqari [al-Minqari. 1382/1960. 570] that since Uthman was killed by the people, who had been outraged by his arbitrary actions, then the assassins should not be liable to *lex talionis* justice. The real issue between 'Ali and Mu'awiya was a much deeper one viz. whether Syria or Iraq would have the pre-eminence; whether the Meccan aristocratic families represented by the Umayyads or the first converts to the Prophet's message would guide the *ummah*; and therefore which of two models of government would determine the direction of the nascent Muslim state and empire. This is reflected in the eventual historical narratives of the dispute and conflict from the Syrian/Medinese [Salih ibn Kaysan in al-Baladuri: 1936. 464-466] and the Iraqi/Kufan perspectives [Ibn Shihab az-Zuhri in al-Baladuri: 1936. 481-482].

On finding that Mu'awiya was inflexible, 'Ali now moved to the offensive. Two armies, each numbering tens of thousands confronted each other at Siffin. Skirmishing was interrupted by a truce from the beginning of Muharram 37/ 19 June 657, and some parleys before battle was finally joined with skirmishes and individual combat on the last day of Muharram 37/18 July, 657. The full-scale battle began on 8 Safar 37/26 July 657. According to the main historical accounts the conflict lasted 'three days and three nights' with a variant tradition stating that the battle lasted four days [al-Tabari: 1879-1901. 3285-3286 & Minqari: 1382/1962. 221-222]. As the conflict progressed Mu'awiya seemed to be losing the contest and 'Amr ibn al-As urged him to have copies of the *Qur'an* placed on his troops' lances [al-Tabari: 1879-1901. I, 3329-3333]. Such a move, notorious in Muslim history did not offer surrender but indicated that the conflict should be resolved by consulting the sacred text. The armies, wearied by the fight and their losses [sources state 70,000 casualties if not more] agreed to this proposal. 'Ali was compelled by his supporters to submit the issue to arbitration and moreover to choose his arbitrator from amongst the 'neutrals'. His followers were convinced that their position was right and lawful. Influential within both parties were groups of 'Qur'an readers', who initially met during the truce to determine the procedures to be followed.

At *Siffin* a convention was drawn up within which the two arbitrators Abu Musa al-Ashari for 'Ali, and Amr ibn al-As for Mu'awiya would announce their decision at a half-way point between Syria and Iraq in the presence of witnesses chosen by themselves. The arbitrators would convene and make their judgement by Ramadan, seven months later but they might advance or postpone a decision until the end of the year 37/657.

The arbitration agreement was written and signed in duplicate on 15 Safar 37/2 August 657 Two versions of the convention have been transmitted in which the points for arbitration are not defined: all that is stated is that they were to consult the *Qur'an* 'from the first to the last Surah', and failing clear guidance from the *Qur'an,* the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, excluding what gives rise to divergences. Vaglieri asserts that their task was to determine whether the actions of which Uthman had been accused were or were not *ahdath* i.e. arbitrary actions contradicting the divine Law [Vaglieri: 1952; 1-94]. If Uthman were to be proven guilty then his murder could be considered an act of justice; but if he had not transgressed the Law then the conclusion would be that his murder was indeed unlawful [*mazluman*] and therefore Mu'awiya would be justified in seeking the right of vengeance. In addition however, a decision against 'Ali would also involve the forfeiture of the caliphate for him. While the arbitration continued the respective military forces returned to their bases but already at Siffin some had protested against the recourse to arbitration stating: *la hum illa li'llah* i.e. 'No decision except God's'. The implication was that recourse to human arbitration was improper because a way forward already existed in the *Qur'an* viz S 49. 8 - 9:

> If two parties of the Believers fight with one another, make peace between them, but if one rebels against the other, then fight against that one which rebels until it returns to the obedience to God.....

[S 49. 8-9].

In 'Ali's eyes the 'rebels' at first had been Ai'sha with Talha and al-Zubayr, and now it was Mu'awiya. The dissentients to the option for arbitration understandably maintained that it was 'Ali's duty to continue the fight against Mu'awiya as the circumstances had not altered [Jafri:.

This position amongst some of 'Ali's followers was taken up by others that arbitration was a sin against God. Some thousands repented of agreement to the convention and halted at Harura near to Kufa, and thus gained the name *Harurites.* By making concessions to them the caliph managed to persuade the majority to his side once more; but on returning to Kufa, 'Ali denied that he would renege on the Siffin agreement. Then, when it became public knowledge that he had in fact dispatched his emissary Abu Musa to meet with Amr, the dissentients began to leave 'Ali's side; 3000 or 4000 left Kufa secretly with hundreds more leaving Basra. So was created the *Kharijite* movement [the seceders] who were to represent a puritan expression and longing for the pristine Muslim community. Mu'awiya attended the arbitration in person whilst 'Ali was represented by Abu Musa and his cousin ibn Abbas, excusing himself on the grounds that he was dealing with the troubles caused by his dissentients. Traditions give vague information as to the place and date of the first meeting. It certainly occurred in Ramadan 37/February 658, either at Dumat al-Djandal halfway between Syria and Iraq, or at Adhruh, between Ma'an and Petra. There are grounds for accepting that the first meeting with just six persons attending was held at Dumat al-Djandal, and a subsequent meeting at Adhruh in the month Sha'ban 38/658. The Kufan/Iraqi tradition focuses upon the first meeting with the Medinese/Syrian on the second session, which 'Ali did not recognise. It is most likely that at the first encounter the participants agreed on their investigations, which stated that Uthman had committed no sin since only on this supposition can subsequent events be interpreted satisfactorily. The account of this significant arbitration procedure has been much debated. Caetani accepts that there were the two meetings at Dumat al-Jandal and Adruh [Caetani: 1905-1926. X. 30-31] an opinion endorsed by Veccia-Vaglieri. Djait and Lammens suggest that only one meeting was convened between Abu Musa and 'Amr.

It is more likely that two did occur but only the first involved implementation of any agreement [Djait: 1989. 276 & Lammens: 1908. 126-129]. In the *Wak'at Siffin* an explanation reveals why their decision is only known indirectly. As a measure of precaution, 'the two men agreed at Dumat al-Djandal to say nothing' [al-Minqari: 1382/1962. 618ff]. Although the decision was not published, it is clear that it became widely known to both parties. As a consequence, the Syrians took the *ba'ya* to Mu'awiya as caliph in Dhu'l Ka'da 37/April 658 [al-Tabari 1879-1901. I. 3359 & II. 199]. Whilst 'Ali publicly protested against the arbitrators asserting that the verdict was contrary to both the *Qur'an* and the *sunnah*, and as a result he was not obliged to accept it. He then reassembled his forces and set out to engage Mu'awiya in battle once more. In his advance however, he turned to deal with the Kharijite insurgents at al-Nahrawan believing that it was essential to address this resistance before confronting the Syrian forces. At the same time Mu'awiya initiated a series of raids upon pro-'Ali Bedouin desert communities to the west of Kufa before seizing Egypt [Safar 38/658] and thus depriving 'Ali of a significant reserve for his cause.

In confronting the Kharijites, 'Ali firstly sought to re-enlist their loyalty but to no effect. The dissidents demanded that he should first admit that he had been in error *kufr* by agreeing to the convention at Siffin. 'Ali refused to such an act and after offering terms *aman* to the secessionists [and some accepted them], he attacked the rebels on 9 Safar 38AH/17 July 658. 'Ali was the first to regret what culminated in a massacre. Many pious and sincere believers died; contemporary opinion went against him; and the defections from his side increased. The caliph was compelled to retreat to Kufa, rescinding his decision to move against Mu'awiya.

This intra-*ummah* conflict and maneuvers changed the situation totally; no longer was it a matter of a caliph facing a rebellious subordinate but rather it became two rivals competing for the supreme power. Mu'awiya gained ground whilst 'Ali had become embroiled in a mass of difficulties: arbitration had gone against him, which disqualified him in the eyes of many for the caliphate; he had lost many of his own supporters by agreeing to the convention, and then by the massacre of the Kharijites, which was compounded by his seeming vacillation. By this point, the arbitrators with many eminent Muslims present, excluding 'Ali and his representatives, had met at Adhruh in Sha'ban 38/January 659. In the first meeting, with only the two arbitrators and certain others present, the original verdict of Abu Musa and Amr was made officially public and the selection of a new caliph was discussed. From the sources it transpires that Amr maintained the claim of Mu'awiya for the caliphate against Abu Musa who preferred the nomination of Abd Allah ibn Umar, who in turn refused the nomination because of the lack of unanimity [Dabashi: 1989. 123]. Abu Musa with Amr's agreement then proposed that both Mu'awiya and 'Ali were disqualified and that the decision should be referred to a committee. However, in subsequent public conversations and debate Abu Musa adhered to his nomination for caliph Umar's son, and Amr restated his preference for Mu'awiya with 'Ali being deposed. These traditions seem to agree with the preceding events at Dumat al-Djandal. The unexpected suggestion of Amr seems to have been a strictly personal initiative, which as one given a heavy responsibility, he saw himself as entitled to put forward. But this declaration, which so clearly contradicted the earlier agreement [as Abu Musa's definite and indignant reaction to it reveals], was generally to be judged by later generations as disloyalty. It must be noted that in the plenary assembly which followed the Adhruh conference no support was voiced for 'Ali. The conflict which followed Amr's declaration was a reaction against the Umayyads, not one in favour of 'Ali at this point. In fact the conference broke up without making any decisions about the caliphate, whether it was now to be considered vacant, or who was the duly nominated successor. By his diminishing number of supporters, 'Ali continued to be regarded as the rightful caliph and in turn, Mu'awiya was so perceived by his party. During 39/659 the situation remained uncertain. From his effective confinement at Kufa, 'Ali made brief and small expeditions into Iraq and Arabia. In Khurasan and in the east, Arab rule was rejected but an uprising against him in Fars was skilfully suppressed by Zihad ibn Abihi, 'Ali's governor there. By 40/660, 'Ali had no control over either Mecca or Medina and could not halt an incursion on the Yemen by Mu'awiya, the very province he had won for the Prophet himself. Ultimately, on Friday 17 Ramadan 40/ 26 January 661 a Kharijite from Egypt, 'Abd al-Rahman ibn 'Amr Muljam al-Muradi, in revenge for those killed at Nahrawan attacked 'Ali with a poisoned weapon at the entrance of the mosque in Kufa. He met 'Ali with the words 'The judgement belongs to God, 'Ali, not to you'. [Madelung: 1997. 308]. 'Ali died two days later during the night before Sunday 19 Ramadan/28 January. He had ordered that if he died then his assassin should be executed and if he did live he would decide how to deal with ibn Muljam. The judgement was carried out on the assailant. A doubtful tradition exists that ibn Muljam was but one of a group of extremists who planned to remove from Islam the three persons, who in their estimation were seen as responsible for the civil war. Mu'awiya and Amr as the other alleged guilty parties were to have died at the same time.

'Ali was prepared for burial by his sons from Fatima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya from a subsequent wife/concubine of the Hanafi tribe, with a nephew 'Abd Allah ibn Ja'far. These with 'Ubayd Allah ibn al-Abbas buried him. 'Ali's actual burial place was kept secret evidently for fear that his remains should be exhumed and disgraced. It was not until the time of Caliph Harun al-Rasid that it was announced that the burial place had been identified at a point some miles from Kufa, where a sanctuary subsequently developed. Najaf evolved around the shrine together with a vast cemetery within which devout Shi'i both aspired to be and were buried close to their first and later Imams.

'Ali's death came at a point when after considerable difficulties and setbacks, the indecisive situation at Siffin, the compromising arbitration on his behalf, and the tragic conflict at Nahrawan there seemed to be a turning of favour towards him. The unscrupulous policies of Mu'awiya and his associates were becoming more evident to the Iraqi Muslims by the Umayyad sponsored raids in to their territories. The Kufans and Basrans were becoming ready to withstand the Syrians for their independence if not wholly for the caliphal claims of 'Ali.

2.1.6 Biographical studies of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib.

'Ali's life gave both a socio-political statement and in time a focus for esteem and imitation by means of his close family connection to the Prophet. Following his death various aspects of 'Ali's character have been noted and celebrated. The Arabic *maghazi* writings for example, related the military accomplishments of the Prophet and the companions, also marked 'Ali's skill and bravery in battle.

This style of praise for 'Ali spread to other parts of the Muslim world. In this way, popular literature indicates the reverence and respect in which the Muslim community began to hold 'Ali in general. This is especially true in poetry as two great mystical poets, Farid al-Din Attar [d. circa 627/1229] and Jalal al-Din Rumi [605-672/1207-1273] exemplify in their work feelings for 'Ali preserved throughout the *ummah.* Other poets such as Abd al-Majd Majdud Sana'i [d. circa 509/1131], and the panegyric poets Abu al-Qasim Hasan ibn Ahmad Unsuri [d. circa 423/1045] and Afdal al-Din Badil Khaqani [d. circa 577/1199] illuminate the attitudes held for 'Ali. The Arab 'Ali was taken up by these Persian poets, who became key sources for understanding the spread of veneration for and devotion to 'Ali, and from them came influence upon the literature of Islam in the Indian sub-continent for which Persian was the lingua franca for centuries. The governing classes, the civil service and the court establishments of north India and the Deccan alike used Persian as much as the educated Hindu tradition classes. A central theme glorified in the popular and poetic literature is the strong relationship between the Prophet and 'Ali. During the Prophet's early and troubled ministry the two men had shared the difficulties and encouraged each other. From the time that the Prophet had declared his message to his tribe, 'Ali had stood up with clarity of conviction to support him. After the *hijrah,* Muhammad established a tie of brotherhood between the two groups of Muslims, making each Muslim from Medina responsible for the establishment of a Muslim from Mecca. The Prophet himself did not take such a "brother" from Medina but declared instead that he and 'Ali were brothers.

From the occasions that Muhammad declared his regard and affection for 'Ali developed the concept that both he and 'Ali came from the same source and were created from the same light. Al-Dijn Attar writes:-

The Prophet said to him: "O light of my eyes, both of us were created from one "Since 'Ali is of one light with the Prophet they are as one person with no trace of duality"

[Attar [ed. Roulani]: 1960. 23]

The close relationship between the two cousins has been noted on many occasions. 'Ali with Fatima, and their two sons Hasan and Husayn were termed the Prophet's family and referred to as the "People of the House" *Ahl i-Bayt.* In Persian writing they are called 'Panjtan-i Pak' the 'five pure ones'. Sana'i's lines:

In our lane there are more than a hundred 'Ali's with beauty and glory, but the sagacious one does not call any of them Murtada.

[Sana'i [ed Razavi]: 1962. 21]

reveals the special place that was accorded to 'Ali in the community. 'Ali is in addition praised for his knowledge and learning *ilm.* A frequently reiterated *Hadith* states:

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the divine law itself. Most of the Sufi orders will trace their lineage or chain of transmission *silsilah* back to him and claim that he received his own initiation from the prophet. Reference in panegyrics to ‘Ali’s learning is a frequent form of praise. Khaqani eulogised Abu al-Fath Minchuchir Shirwanshah by saying:

You are the chosen one in the whole world, because you are like Nabi [Muhammad] and Murtada; in you is the sea of knowledge, and you are the gate of the city of knowledge

[Khaqani ed Abasi & Nakha’i: 1957. 373].

The moral and saintly characteristics of ‘Ali fill popular Muslim literature and draw especial attention to his generosity. A particular narrative associated with him is the story of the three loaves. Several versions of the story are recorded. One popular tradition states that Hasan and Husayn had fallen ill, and ‘Ali, Fatima and their servant decided to fast for three days. On the first day at the time of breaking the fast, a beggar came to their household and they gave him their bread. On the evening of the next two days the bread was given away in the same manner. According to some commentators, this generous example is remembered in Surah 76.

'Hath there come upon man [ever] any period of time in which he was a thing unremembered?' Ayah 1 begins *Hal ata* [Did he come?]. In Persian poetry *hal ata* is often used as a noun to refer to 'Ali.

In didactic poetry as well as in panegyrics 'Ali is often portrayed as *sahib-i hal ata* [master/lord of *hal ata*] and this generous gesture is celebrated as the embodiment of the continual encouragement in the Qur'an to give with generosity. So Attar for example, praises 'Ali:

> With the thrust of his lance he conquered the world; the story of the three loaves passed into the other world. In the mysteries of giving, he had total sincerity; and seventeen verses of the Qur'an are especially for the three loaves. Those three loaves were like the discs of the moon and the sun, and the two worlds are seated at his table for all eternity.
>
> [Attar, ed Rouhani: 1960. 23].

Rulers and patrons in the Islamic world were eulogised by reference and comparison with qualities of the Prophet and 'Ali. Khaqani for example, wrote of Muwaffaq al-Din Abd al-Gaffar: "You have a sun-like heart and Jupiter-like asceticism; your temperament is like Ahmad and your generosity like Haydar" [Khaqani ed Abbasi and Nakha'i: 1957. 314]. In Sufi thought and devotion worldly poverty was seen as a positive quality and commended the deliberate effort to disregard comfort and material wealth in this life. So poverty *faqr* is a spiritual quality marking out greatness and one that helps the seeker on the way to God by liberating him or her from the traps of wealth. Many Sufi stories both rooted in historical context as well as in quasi-legend praise the virtues of simplicity in this life which will result in rewards for the eternal life to come. The Prophet as well as 'Ali and Fatima are seen as having borne great hardships and deprivations. 'Attar notes Ali's poverty:

> So absolutely was he connected with poverty and hunger, that he was thrice divorced from gold and silver. Though silver and gold are highly valued, they are as a calf to these people. How could a calf ever have dared to match itself against such a lion?
>
> [Attar ed Rouhani: 1960. 24].

In reality Attar relates that 'Ali even had to hire himself out as labourer for daily wages:

> He could not bear to be under anyone's obligation; therefore with resolution he became a hired labourer for a Jew. Some one asked him: 'Why did you do this?' He became angry and wielding his tongue like a sword replied: 'The removing rocks from mountaintops I prefer over being obligated to people. People tell me: 'It is shameful [to work] for a living'. But I say: 'The shame is in the baseness of begging'.
>
> [Attar, ed Rouhani: 1960. 24].

The concept of a *faqr* was related to the idea that on the way of God the pilgrim loses his or her own selfhood. One Hadith urges that one should pray as if seeing God, or if that were impossible at least as if one were being seen by God. Tradition states that on occasions 'Ali was so absorbed in prayer that he felt no physical pain. Both Sana'i and Attar tell the story of when in a battle 'Ali was struck in a leg by an arrow, which had to be removed. The arrow was removed successfully whilst 'Ali was praying and was unaware of the pain [Sana'i ed. Razavi: 1950. 140 and Attar ed Rouhani: 1960. 24]. From his prayer life and spirituality 'Ali developed a confidence and assurance which filled his life and was marked by Attar:

> "Whatever he said he uttered out of the sea of certainty. One day he openly expressed and stated: '*If the hidden was uncovered* [a mystical reference to God] assists me, indeed until I do not see him how can I worship him?'
>
> Attar ed. Rouhani: 1960. 24].

In Muslim chronicles the bravery of 'Ali is recorded as legendary. Anecdotes refer to his personal strength and military skills as well as his courage in combat itself. Certainly some of the narratives may be exaggerated beyond their historical reality but nonetheless 'Ali's bravery and resolve in battle were standards soon to be emulated.

Sana'i relates that 'Ali [under his nickname of *Haydar*] wore no armour on his back explaining that if the soldier's back were to be turned towards the enemy then it would surely be preferable for him to die. 'A man, like steel is not like water which when armoured turns around with every current of wind' [Sana'i, Ed Razavi: 1950. 388]. Attar also wrote:

> It is related that he had a coat of armour [with front], the backside of which was simply a window. If his back was as exposed as his face it was because on his back he had the Prophet as his armour. Once he declared:'Though they should slay me, no-one shall see my back in battle'.
>
> [Attar, Ed Rouhani: 1960. 24].

During the siege of Khaybar [7/629] tradition relates that the Prophet specially asked for 'Ali's assistance. The Muslim army had not succeeded in capturing the fortress of Qamus for several days [up to thirty nine days some traditions state] the Prophet declared that he would install as commander the one who would definitely bring victory and who was loved by God. 'Ali was then appointed commander. Popular narratives describe how 'Ali's strength on this occasion was unparalleled and that he was able to lift the fortress's door by himself whereas it had previously needed forty men to carry it, and then place it across the moat.

The story continues that the door fell short by a span and that 'Ali was able to support it by himself whilst the Muslim army crossed over it to take the city. Such a feat of strength and obedience can be ranked with those of the Hebrew Scriptures' Samson or the Homeric character of Odysseus. In eastern Muslim literature in particular the historical 'Ali now endowed with superhuman qualities replaces pre-Islamic era legendary characters.

Jalal al-Din ar-Rumi [605/1207- 672/1273] in his "Mathnavi" describes a battle scene in which 'Ali was about to kill an opponent when the latter spat in 'Ali's face. 'Ali put down his sword and refused to kill or even to fight again with the man as his action might be construed as being for personal reasons or revenge rather than solely for God's own sake. The drama ended with the opponent so impressed with 'Ali's integrity and sincerity of purpose that he became a Muslim to understand better the values that 'Ali represented in his actions [Rumi: 1925-1940. II.240]

Combined with the high image of 'Ali as soldier and warrior for the Faith is a popular portrayal of his humility. It is said that he accepted with pride from the Prophet his other nickname of *Abu Turab* "father of dust". Attar reports [Attar, ed Rouhani: 1950] how 'Ali once unwittingly trod upon an ant and was overcome with remorse. He was ready to do anything to make recompense and according to Attar begged forgiveness from the very colony of ants. Such utter humility alongside his military stature gave him an added and special place in populist devotion. In the Sunni traditions 'Ali's high status is still laced with plausibility but in the Shi'i world 'Ali is exalted even higher and in extreme sections to a quasi-divine aura.

The sword Dhu *al-Faqar,* that 'Ali bore into battle also became a potent symbol of his authority. Tradition asserts that it was a gift from the Prophet and popular stories describe how it was wielded by 'Ali on the battlefield. In the literary genre of the panegyric ode *qasidah* the poets urged their patrons to be as brave as 'Ali and to have at hand such a weapon as *Dhu al-faqr* in order to rule successfully in the name of God.

It also became a measure of the sincerity of a ruler. In an ode Sana'i asks his patron:

How can your religion be strong from you and your speech, if you are not 'Ali and your tongue is not Dhu al-Faqr?

[Sana'i, Ed Razavi: 1962. 91].

Unsuri praises Sultan Mahmud as the example of justice and rulership describing him as one who achieves the best results in both war and peace:

"But with that which agitates his kingdom, do not blame him if he is not tranquil. Instead of the violet, he will grip the rein; instead of the goblet in grip is Dhu al-Faqr"

[Unsuri, ed Qarib: 1962. 87].

The reference to Dhu al-Faqr is an indicator of the serious intent of Sultan Mahmud and it is equally a sign of peace making with justice:

If he receives an attack, he is like a rock mountain; if he makes an attack he is like a spring breeze. At the time of treaty, [he is] the love of friendship; at the place of battle [he is] the sword Dhu al-Faqr

[Unsuri, ed Qarib: 1962. 168].

Alongside 'Ali stands the figure of his wife Fatima, the Prophet's much loved daughter, who has been given her own status as a suffering wife and mother, an example of purity and faithfulness. Generations of Muslims have referred to Fatima as the "Lady of Paradise" *al-Zahra* honouring her for her simplicity, devotion and silent suffering. This devotion is expressed in both popular writings as well as in classical literature. In this vein, Attar with the Sufi preference for asceticism tells the story of 'Ali and Fatima's wedding and her simple dowry:

Usamah relates as follows: "The master [Muhammad]
commanded:'Summon Abu Bakr and Umar before me.'
When they were before him, he said, 'Call Zahrah [Fatima]
also'.
To her he said: 'All that you have for your dowry, I wish you
to bring before me.
Although you are the light of my eyes, O illuminator of
hearts, today I will bestow to you Haydar'.
That excellent one immediately brought out of the house a
hand-mill,
An old palm-leaf mat, a toothbrush and a polished pair of wooden clogs.
She also brought a wooden-bowl, a strong sheepskin cushion,
And a mantle with seven patches. She laid it all down for
viewing.
The Prophet, master of one and all, hung the hand-mill on his neck.
Simultaneously, Abu Bakr picked up the mat, Umar the
cushion, and they went off.
Then Fatima, the light of the Prophet's eye, went and flung
the old veil on her head.
She then tied the clogs on her feet and took the toothbrush in
her hand."
Usamah continued: "Then I took the bowl in my hand and set
off.
When I arrived before Haydar's room, I was unable to see

faces of people because of my tears.
The Prophet asked:'O righteous one, why are you weeping so bitterly?'
I answered:'Because of Zahrah's poverty my soul and
liver have become stone.
He who is lord of two worlds - so plain is his daughter's
dowry.
See what Caesar and Chosroes possess and what worldly
possessions the Prophet owned!'
He said to me: 'O Usmah, even this small amount is a great
deal since we all must die.
Just as neither hand nor foot not face nor body nor soul will
remain, these things also will be obliterated.'"
Such was the wedding of the Prophet's darling child - what
do you expect?
You have heard how the Prophet lived - do you wish to
amass worldly possessions?
Since the work of this world is merely to drink your blood,
why collect together what will be a burden around your
neck?

[Attar, ed Rouhani: 1960. 217].

This image of 'Ali as the brave, chivalrous yet humble and profoundly spiritual leader has suffused Muslim imagination and devotion for centuries both in Sunni and most certainly amongst the Shi'i. Certainly these expressions about 'Ali may be seen as attributed in hindsight to endow him as one of the key early leaders of Islam with Sufi characteristics. His life, beset by great troubles and traumas, with considerable political adversities has been an example for countless Muslims to choose the right path regardless of what might ensue. In general the *ummah* respects his closeness to the Prophet himself both as relative and associate in faith from the earliest days. From the evidence and testimonies about him, 'Ali was not one to compromise his faith and integrity nor to give preference to favourites nor to seek selfish gain. The entire Muslim world admires these characteristics but none more so than the Shi'i tradition.

Contemporary accounts describe 'Ali as not tall but extremely strong in physique, with a flowing beard, soft grey eyes and a ruddy complexion. In devotional writings however, it is more the spiritual aspects of his nature that have received attention and been eulogised. Consequently, 'Ali is the hero, a figure of authority, a symbol of perfection who is utterly reliable in times of need. Indeed in the areas into which Islam was to spread their ancient heroes and their features were to be incorporated into the personality of 'Ali.

In his personality, it is asserted that 'Ali was brusque and firm. The two nicknames attributed to him, *Haydara* [lion] and *Abu Turab* [father of dust], a term probably later used contemptuously by his enemies can be seen as a tributes to his nature of courage and humility [Noldeke: 1898. 30].

By his nine wives and concubines, 'Ali had fourteen sons and nineteen daughters; of his sons only three were to have historical roles viz: Hasan, Husayn and Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, with five sons leaving descendants. Certainly, 'Ali is described as possessing a profound knowledge of the Qur'an of which he was one of the finest 'readers' [Suyuti: 169, 171]. It is unlikely that he created a recension of the text. The political statements, letters, sermons and sayings [*hikam*] attributed to him are collected in *Najh ul-Balagha* [dating from the 5thc/11thc] which includes old historical texts and examples of *adab* literature of courtesies. There is little doubt that 'Ali was gifted as an orator albeit Lammens does not consider his poetic writings as comparable to his rhetorical abilities [Lammens: 1930. 1-11].

A major difficulty in discerning and compiling a faithful description of ‘Ali and his personality is that the dissensions and disputes in which he was involved have continued throughout the history of Islam. Consequently, sources are coloured by tendentiousness although less idealizing or hostile than might at first be assumed. Lammens is hostile in his character description [Lammens: 1930 and 1908] more by forcing texts.

Caetani represents ‘Ali in a milder form, which whilst revealing weaknesses and recognising the pressures and responsibilities upon him, remains opaque in its general description. Neither Lammens nor Caetani bring out ‘Ali’s faith and devotion and how these are reflected in his policies and actions.

There is considerable evidence about his asceticism, observance of religious rituals, his disinterest in material wealth, and his integrity on distributing the spoils of war and justice. There is little reason to doubt these facts and that they were motivated by genuine faith and morality. This seems to have been central to his life and gave ‘Ali a sense of duty. For example, to wage war against errant Muslims was for him a moral act “...to sustain the Faith and to make the right way [*al-huda*] triumphant” [al-Baladhuri cited Caetani: 1926 .40]. After the Battle of the Camel, ‘Ali sought to relieve the suffering of the defeated by preventing the enslavement of their wives and children despite the protests of his own followers. After battles, he is said to have wept for the dead and to have prayed over his enemies. The ambiguity of his attitude towards the Harurites can be explained that in his scrupulous devotion to God he feared disobeying Him. Equally, whilst he was persuaded by his supporters that the arbitration of Siffin was sinful, to have broken the convention would also have been a transgression and so he allowed the process to continue.

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This problematic stems from tension between the authority of an individual charismatic figure, the power of existing but supplanted office holders or their successors, and disaffected radical movements seeking a charismatic leadership. 'Ali's assumption of the caliphate in 35/656 therefore, represented a reassertion of the charismatic lineage of the Prophet [and believed by the Shi'a to be the rightful and solely legitimate form, of rule], a rejection of the form of bureaucratic dynastic rule assumed by the old Meccan aristocracy in the Umayyads [with which it fell into tension], and an offence to the radical charismatic Kharijite movement. The problem of a charismatic authority as understood by the Shi'a and Sufi, influenced expressions within Islam, would come into early and continual conflict with those who would situate their notion of charisma in traditional Arab hierarchic patterns of leadership. Within Islam, there is the key unique and charismatic figure of the Prophet Muhammad with subsequent inspired figures in both Sunni and Shi'a traditions. Within the former are significant reformers, theologians and Sufi teachers. In the latter are again reformers and teachers and notably the Imamate with the pivotal figures of ʻAli and Husayn, the third Imam. These persons represent important interventions of the sacred into the flow of history. By this, charisma also acquires a history as much as a mythology. The histories and sacred biographies of these persons become more than means to recollect and to identify signs of charisma in the future; they become texts about sacred interventions with their own issues and questions about authority.

In examining biographical studies of 'Ali [and indeed in many instances of the Prophet] one is confronted with sacred biography. Becker states that such a genre 'contextualises the present in the past' [Becker: 1979. 211-243]. The reader or listener to the 'biography' faces in his or her context and existence a past, whose coherence is moulded by the 'biography'. This 'biography' however, offers more as it points to a future and encourages the reader/listener to action in the future. Sacred biography as a form of text therefore, points backwards in time to events or a person in which the sacred becomes manifest and makes those events or that person relevant to the present. In addition, it also points to the future when those who read or hear the biography will move beyond their own time to a future reality.

A sacred biography in pointing towards the ultimate through the life of a person generates a model to be emulated by followers and adherents. Reynolds and Capps refer to 'enacted biography' [Reynolds and Capps: 1976. 18] in which 'disciples or students begin self-consciously to pattern their lives according to the biographical model'.

If at his death, 'Ali was a key figure for many Muslims by virtue of his relationship to the Prophet, he was nonetheless the leader of a minority movement. In addition, there were other claimants to the caliphal role, if by force Mu'awiya and by choice of Abu Musa, a son of the second caliph, 'Abd Allah ibn 'Umar. Variant understandings of 'Ali as set in the seventh century can be drawn from the earliest Arabic historical writings in the Medinese/Syrian or Kufan/Iraqi schools with their respective emphases. Such historiographic methods are narrated for example, in Madelung: 1997 and Petersen: 1964 whilst other accounts of 'Ali's life may be classified within the sacred biographical genre. In contrast to the Prophet himself there have been comparatively few examples of scholarly studies of 'Ali such as Madelung and Petersen provide, either as strict biographies of his historical personality focusing on his life [birth, career, death]; types of influences on his thought and aspirations; motives for his socio-political activities; the development of his consciousness; and on his accomplishments. 'Ali however, is not exclusively a figure of seventh century Arabia but an exemplar of faith, whose name has been included in the three tenet *shahadah* as the *wali* of God, and is seen as a martyr, source of spiritual knowledge, and first of the Shi'a Imams. Muslims [as much as a writer of another faith or none] will see 'Ali through a variety of lenses and the role, which he plays in their lives will differ according to their perspectives. Thus, Jordac [1990] writing as a Lebanese Christian, narrates a study of 'Ali in which he is portrayed in entirely superlative terms seeing him for instance as a precursor and initiator of human rights legislation prior to the modern era [Jordac: 1990. 229]. Lalljee [1991] portrays 'Ali in a vein closer to the miraculous hagiographic biographies of the Prophet and stressing both his intimacy with Muhammad and the egalitarian nature of his rule in distinction to figures such as Mu'awiya [Lalljee: 1991. 192-193].

Intrinsic to understandings and portrayals of 'Ali is the theme of his patience, humility and hidden years of waiting before his duly appointed caliphal servant-rule should begin. Hasan [1988] and Chirri [1996] again offer such interpretive accounts of 'Ali's life and experience. Within the lives of charismatic figures such as 'Ali and the Prophet are references to the miraculous, which serve as primary signs of charisma. It is more probable however, that once a person is believed to be charismatic, then a sense of the miraculous will be seen in their words and actions. Brown comments that

'The miracle condenses and validates a situation built up by more discreet means' [Brown: 1971. 87]. There is much greater meaning to be found in a person whose actions can be interpreted as showing that this person has gained spiritual gnosis, an intimacy with the Transcendent. There is a paradox that within complex and powerful societies people will hold in high esteem those who have effectively renounced or denied themselves the advantages of that world. 'Ali is frequently portrayed in sacred biography as forsaking material wealth, albeit in authentic Muslim manner, not the loyalties to and the creation of familial lineage. He is seen as both the author of human sciences and the repository of divine science and knowledge. In addition however, charisma does not only attach itself to world deniers but also to those who have confronted impossible opposition. Clothed with and carrying sacred symbols into battle for a righteous cause against worldly forces such a leader is perceived as a charism laden personality. In a fundamental sense this is the meaning that Weber gave to charisma of office.

> 'Charisma' shall be understood to refer to an *extraordinary* quality of a person, regardless of whether this quality is actual, alleged or presumed. 'Charismatic authority,' hence, shall refer to a rule over men, whether predominantly external or predominantly internal, to which the governed submit because of their belief in the extraordinary quality of the specific person.
>
> [Weber: 1946. 295].

Around 'Ali is such a sacred biographical genre of writing, which esteems the practice of spiritual disciplines and the performance of heroic acts, the concomitant signs endorsing the presence of sacred lineage from the charismatic Prophet, and leading to the imputation of charisma to him as he performs unusual acts.

The authority of charisma is always transmuted when charisma becomes a memory enclosed in an account of a life as a sacred biography rather than an account of a human life and its inter-relationships with others. The power of a sacred biography finally rests with the action it inspires or suggests for those who value or own its significance. Sacred biography however, points towards a 'sacred' which cannot be completely known or expressed through confessional formulae or a religious elite of officials. Sacred biography will always seek to inspire and compel people to emulate the actions and to seek understandings beyond the official and public religion.

2.2 The Position of 'Ali within the Shi`a Tradition.

2.2.1 The Shi'a Tradition.

There is no doubt as to the historicity of 'Ali ibn Abi Talib [598-40/661] as fourth caliph after the death of the prophet Muhammad, cousin, son-in-law and father of the Prophet`s two grandsons. Muslim biographers, historians and jurists of all traditions accept his stature in his lifetime as distinguished judge, pious believer, and determined warrior for Islam.

The various expressions however, of this concept of 'Ali alongside God and Muhammad as a pivot around which religious belief revolves, and which the Twelver-Shi`a developed after 'Ali`s own death are disputed. The majority of Sunni Muslims reject these developments altogether; and Shi`is have themselves been split into contrasting streams, which differ in their understandings of 'Ali`s position with regard to God and in relationship to the Prophet Muhammad.

These sects or streams within Shi`ism have ranged across a broad spectrum: from extremist [*Ghulat*] groups, which give to 'Ali qualities which other Muslim streams and their doctrines restrict to God and the Prophet and thereby placing themselves outside orthodox Islam, to those who confirm belief in the absolute oneness of God [*Tawhid*] and in Muhammad as the sole Prophet of Islam, but place 'Ali as simply the successor of Muhammad chosen either explicitly or implicitly.

Most Shi`ite sects of the early centuries of Islam's growth and development have now either vanished or reduced in size. However, in reviewing scholarly literature on the Twelver-Shi`a Tradition and its perceptions of the identity of Imam 'Ali it is essential to examine the contrasting minority movements which evolved and separated from what came to be termed the Twelver-Shi`a mainstream movement. Indeed this mainstream frequently excommunicated these *Ghulat* movements on the commonly reiterated grounds of deification of the Imams and antinomianism.

2.2.2 The Origins and Early Development of the Shi'a.

Historically, the embryonic Shi'a tradition began to develop in support of the caliphate of 'Ali [35/656-40/661] during the First Civil war, which followed the assassination of the third caliph 'Uthman in 35/656. The Shi'a however, would see the origins and foundation of Shi'ism in the appointment of 'Ali by the Prophet Muhammad as his successor, a choice which it is said to have occurred at Ghadir Khumm shortly before the Prophet's death [Halm: 1991. 8]. The Prophet is described as having taken 'Ali by the hand in front of the resting pilgrims and said "Everyone whose patron I am also has 'Ali as a patron" [*man kuntu mawlahu fa- ''Ali mawlahu*]. Halm affirms the existence of an 'enormous number of such reports' [Halm: 1991. 27]. This choice was ignored in Shi'a perspective by the Muslim community as Abu Bakr was recognised as the first caliph. Following the murder of 'Ali and the abdication of his eldest son, Hasan in 40/661, the Shi'a community maintained a latent opposition to the Umayyad caliphate from their base in 'Ali's former capital of Kufa in Iraq. With their devotion to the family of the Prophet [*Ahl al-Bayt*] [Moosa: 1988: 69] and most especially to 'Ali's sons and their descendants, the Shi'a reflected both local resentment to the loss of the caliphate to Damascus and disdain of Umayyad denigration of 'Ali and his caliphate. In reaction to this course of events against the 'Party of 'Ali' *Shi'at ''Ali* some contemporaries of 'Ali even at this stage taught his divinity and miraculous works [Ayoub: 1978. 82]. Such beliefs however, at this point of Shi'a development remained marginal.

The violent death of 'Ali's second son, Husayn, at Karbala, Iraq in 61/680 led to the formation of a radical tendency within the Shi'a movement. Subsequent to the death of the Umayyad caliph Mu'awiyah in [60/680], the Kufan Shi'a community had invited Husayn to return from his domicile in Medina, promising to endorse his claim to the caliphate.

The Umayyad governor in Iraq Ubaydallah ibn Ziyad however, gained control of the situation and it was with a force of some 4,000 that he encountered Husayn and killed him with many of his relatives on 10 Muharram 61/10 October 680 at Karbala. A Penitents movement *tawwabbun* grew in Kufa, lamenting the death of the Prophet's second grandson at his grave in Karbala and seeking revenge upon those considered responsible for his death. Hagiographic traditions about Husayn's conception, birth and prophesied martyrdom nourished early Shi'a understandings and piety about the suffering of the *Ahl al-Bayt*, together with the especial closeness of Husayn's to his father's end [Momem: 1985. 52]. All but two of Husayn's children died with their father, including an infant son. Husayn's head was sent by messenger to Caliph Yazid, who thrust at it 'with a cane'. A Companion, who was present, al-Tabari records, cried out, 'Take your cane away. How often have I seen the Messenger of God kiss that mouth' [Fishbein: 1990. 75-76]. In fact, hadith relate that Husayn 'was one of those who resembled God's messenger most closely' [Muslim: 1975. II. 1351].

In 63/685 the leadership of the Penitents movement was assumed by al-Mukhtar ibn Abi Ubayd, who raised a rebellion against the Umayyads and proclaimed another son of 'Ali, Muhammad, to be the Imam and *mahdi*, the messianic restorer of true Islam. [Momem: 1985. 35].

Muhammad was not the son of 'Ali by Fatima but from his concubine Hanafiyah and was known from her as ibn Hanafiyah. His following were named *Kaysaniyah* after Amrah Kaysan Mukhyar the guard and leader of the non-Arab *mawli* in Kufa. These clients, both local Semitic and Persian people now joined the Shi'a in large numbers for the first time, although the key leadership roles were still played by Arabs.

The Kaysaniyah movement, which survived the end of al-Mukhtar's revolt and the death of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah in 78/700, outlined some of the key beliefs and doctrines which came to differentiate the radical or *Ghulat* streams and groups of the Shi`a. They unanimously condemned the first three caliphs as usurpers before 'Ali's true succession, and perceived 'Ali and his three sons, Hasan, Husayn and Muhammad as the rightful successors of the Prophet, endowed as divinely appointed Imams with supernatural qualities. Many of them denied the death of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah the Mahdi, in the belief that he was in hiding and would return to rule the world. They taught *ra'jah* the return of many of the dead at the time of the final coming of the Mahdi for retribution prior to the resurrection, and *bada`*, the possibility of change in the decisions of God.

2.2.3 The Abbasid Revolution.

The *Hashimiyah,* a branch of the Kaysaniyah maintained the line of the Imams to Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyah's son Abu Hashim, who unlike his father, took an active role in the leadership and organisation of the movement. After his death c. 118/717 the Hashimiyah separated into several groups over the succession.

A majority grouping recognised Muhammad ibn 'Ali, a descendant of the Prophet's uncle Abbas, as Imam after Abu Hashim. They became historically significant as the core of the revolutionary movement, which overthrew the Umayyad dynasty and established the Abbasid caliphate in 132/749.

At first the Abbasids supported the Shi'i, establishing the reign of the family of the Prophet and demanding revenge for the murders of 'Ali and his sons. In time however, they distanced themselves from their largely extremist Shi'i followers and sought broader support from the Muslim communities. The Shi'a increasingly restricted their support to direct descendants of 'Ali and Fatima, daughter of the Prophet [Jafri: 1979. 272]. With the collapse of a widely supported Shi'i revolt in favour of the 'Alid Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyah, caliph al-Mahdi [775 - 785] encouraged the Abbasid Shi'a to trace the line of divinely invested Imams back to Abbas through his own ancestors, thus denying that the Abbasids had inherited their title from Abu Hashim and 'Ali himself. Soon afterwards the Abbasid Shi'a disintegrated as a faction.

2.2.4 Extremists and Moderates.

In the subsequent centuries the mainstream Shi'a confronted and excommunicated other offshoots of the Hashimiyah. Bayan ibn Sam'an [d. 314/936] taught in Kufa that Abu Hashim had conferred prophethood upon him and that Abu Hashim would return as the mahdi. Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiyah [d. 126/748-9] a descendant of 'Ali's brother Ja'far claimed that the Spirit of God had devolved upon him through the prophets and Imams and that he was capable of raising the dead.

The elaboration of the doctrine of metempsychosis, the pre-existence of human souls, metaphorical interpretation of the resurrection, judgement, paradise, and hell and a cyclical history of eras [*adwar*] and aeons [*akwar*] initiated by seven Adams is attributed to Abd Allah ibn al-Harith from al-Mada'in, Iraq.

Such teachings became characteristic of many *Ghulat* groups, who faced repudiation by the more moderate, conservative Shi`a. By the end of the second century AH, the Kasaniyah had virtually disappeared being replaced in the radical aspect of Shi`ism by the *Imamiyah*, who traced the line of Imams after ʻAli through Hasan, Husayn and the latter's descendants.

The early centuries of Shi`ism's development were a milieu where sects and movements evolved and flourished temporarily before facing extinction. [Momem: 1984. 45-60] traces in detail these sect tendencies for out of this context the ultimately majority group of Twelver-Shi`a [*Ithna` Ashariya*] were to emerge. They would come to hold many of the distinctive doctrines of the *Ghulat* sects such as the eschatological doctrine of the Mahdi, the state of occultation, and esoteric exegesis of the Qur`an [Hodgson: 1955. 1-4].

2.2.5 The Alawiyun - Alawi Nusayris.

The Arabic term *Alawi* designates broadly speaking a follower of ʻAli ibn Abi Talib. Whilst all Shi`a whether orthodox or heterodox would affirm allegiance to the cause of ʻAli, the Alawi-Nusayris who can most properly be termed *Ghuluw* [exaggerators] take this devotion to the Imam to greater heights and mix their doctrines and practices with syncretism from Zoroastrianism, Judaism and Christianity.

Virtually every founder of a Shi`i movement, including the *Ghulat* sects, has asserted either descent from or attachment to 'Ali, or his immediate descendants, the twelve Imams. The Alawi Nusayri, though not making such claims to descent from any of the Imams, believe that each of the Imams had a 'gate' [*bab*] beginning with Salman al-Farisi, who was the gate of 'Ali himself and ending with Abu Shu`ayb Muhammad ibn Nusayr, the 'gate' to the eleventh Imam, al-Hasan al-Askari [232/846 -260/874]. Certain traditions concerning the Prophet and 'Ali state that they saw Salman al-Farisi, a Persian convert to Islam as a member of the *Ahl i-Bayt* [Moosa: 1988. 78] [al-Faraj ibn al-Jawzi: 1969 ed. 535, 546]. The twelfth Imam had no 'gate', however Muhammad ibn Nusayr continued to assume that role during the period of occultation. With the office of *bab* as one of their basic religious institutions, and with their claim that ibn Nusayr is their founder they are often known as the *Nusayriah*. Muhammad ibn Jundub succeeded ibn Nusayr, who was followed by Muhammad al-Jinan al-Junbulani. Crucially, at this time a Husayn ibn Hamdan Khasibi originally from Egypt, was attracted to northern Syria and became the ideological leader of the movement.

The affairs of the Alawi communities fluctuated in subsequent centuries under the Sunni Seljuk Turkish, Mongol and then Mamluk domination [al-Tawil: 1921/1966 ed. 309-310].

The Hanbali scholar Ahmad ibn Taymiyyah [661/1263-728/1328] produced a scathing refutation of the Alawi Nusayriah revealing many of the characteristics of such a *Ghulat* group from an orthodox perspective [ibn Taymiyyah: 1905 ed. 94-102]

In which they are alleged to accept the drinking of wine, the reincarnation of the soul, and that the god who created the universe is 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, who to them is the Imam in heaven and earth; and to claim that the Prophet Muhammad is only the 'name' while 'Ali is the 'meaning' and essence of the divine.

Alongside the Alawi, ibn Tamiyyah condemns other sects such as the Malahidah Assassins, the Qaramitah, the Isma'iliyah, and all kinds of *batini* esoteric movements. For ibn Tamiyyah such groups were guilty of *kufr* [unbelief] worse than that of Jews and Christians accusing them of *mushrikun* [polytheism]. A further contemporary writer, the North African ibn Battutah [704/1304-780/1378], on passing through Nusayri territory, observed that they believed in 'Ali as their god, and observed neither *salah* [prayer], nor washing [*wudu*], nor fasting [*saum*] [ibn Battutah: 1962 ed].

In the 16th century the Sunni Ottoman Turks oppressed Shi'ism on several fronts: against a large-scale Shi'i revolt in Anatolia, against the Shi'i Safavids in Iran, and also against the Alawiyun of Syria. However, once the initial victory was attained the Alawis were allowed to survive under the benign neglect of Ottoman rule. Similar mechanisms occurred in the early 20th century with the fall of the Ottoman rule and its replacement by the French Mandate in the region until members of the Alawiyun became a key elite group and thence the government of modern Syria.

Inasmuch as the Alawi Nusayriah affirm devotion to 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, they share many beliefs and practices with the main groups of Shi'ism.

Essentially, within Shi`ism the Alawi represent a 'low' or popular stream alongside the scriptural-juristic 'high' tradition of the Twelvers, Ishma`iliyah Seveners, and the Zaydiyah. Whilst the Twelver mainstream developed the concept of occultation to resolve the issue of continuity of leadership by the Imamate, the Alawi evolved the idea of the *bab* [gate] providing access to the Imam. However, with geographical and political isolation, and the domination by a Sunni Seljuk majority the Alawi had little, opportunity to evolve more sophisticated 'high' Shi'a Islamic ideas.

In addition moreover, to their extremist ideas about 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Alawi incorporated Christian elements into their system as their lands were occupied for a period of time by Christian Crusader invaders. A quasi-Trinitarian doctrine surfaced joining 'Ali as *ma`na* [esoteric meaning and essence], Muhammad as the *ism* [outward exoteric name], and Salman al-Farisi as the *bab* [gate to 'Ali's esoteric essence]. Joined together the three appear in a profession of faith *shahadah*:

> 'I testify that there is no god but 'Ali ibn Abu Talib al-*ma'bud* [the worshipped one], no veil *hijab* but Muhammad *al mahmud* [the praised one], and no gate but Salman al-Farisi *al maqsud* [the intended one]'.

[Moosa: 1987. 216]

By adding the observance of Christian festivals in addition to various Sunni and Shi`i events, the inclusion of Mass type liturgies, belief in reincarnation, a syncretistic pattern has been created, which has led to scholars describing the Alawi as a 'deformation' [Weulersse: 1940 and 1946] and as 'neither Islamic, nor Christian nor Jewish' [al-Husayni: 1980 ed].

However, another perspective has attempted a rapprochement with orthodox Twelver-Shi`i opinion in which Shirazi affirms that the terms *Alawi* and *Shi`a* are interchangeable [Shirazi: n.d].

2.2.6 The Ahl i-Haqq ['Ali Ilahis, 'Aliyu Ilahis].

The term 'Ahl i-Haqq' describes not so much a distinct sect as a loose confederation of groups each with its own beliefs. Because of their deification of 'Ali, the Ahl i-Haqq are also named the *'Ali Ilahis* [deifiers of 'Ali] or *'Ali Allah's* [partisans of God-'Ali] [Stead: 1932. 184]. The first European scholar to describe this group with the term *Ahl i-Haqq* was Gobineau [1859. 337-370] discussing the nature of the sect in conjunction with the *Alawi-Nusayri*, because of the place given by both the sects' adherents to Nusayr a follower of 'Ali [al-Majlisi: n.d vol 44]. Certainly, they share a common factor in their apotheosis of 'Ali but the merger of the two groups is unfounded.

2.2.7 The Ismai'lis [The Seveners].

A major branch of the Shi'a, the Isma'iliyah trace their descent from the line of Imams through Isma'il, son of Ja'far al-Sadiq [d 148/765]. Isma'il originally designated by Ja'far as his successor but died before him [d. 138/755].

Some of Ja'far's followers considered this designation as irreversible and either denied the death of Isma'il or accepted that his son Muhammad was to be the rightful Imam after Ja'far.

Essentially, Muslim heresiographers describe two Isma'ili groups after the death of Ja'far: "the Pure Isma'iliyah" who held that Isma'il had not died and would return as the *Qa'iam* [Mahdhi], whilst the Mubarakiyah recognised Ja'far's grandson Muhmammad ibn Isma'il as the rightful Imam. Quiescent until the third century AH [ninth century] the Isma'iliyah then reappeared in history as a well organized if secretive movement with an elaborate doctrinal system spread by missionaries *da'is* or "summoners" throughout much of the Muslim world

The movement was split by schism c. 899 after 'Abd Allah ['Ubayd Allah] the future Fatimid caliph al-Mahdi succeeded to the leadership. The Imamate of Muhammad ibn Isma'il was rejected together with the belief in his return as Mahdi. Al-Mahdi claimed the Imamate for himself explaining to the *da'is* that his predecessors in the leadership had been 'Alid Imams but had concealed their status and rank out of caution [Lewis: 1940/1975]. They had been descendants of 'Abd Allah, another son of Ja'far, who had been the rightful successor of Ja'far rather than either Isma'il or his son Muhammad, whose names had merely been used to conceal their identity as the Imams.

This significant change of doctrine was not accepted by some of the leading *da'is*, amongst whom in the Kufan area were Hamdan Qarmat and 'Abdan.

The followers of Qarmat were termed "Qaramitah" and this name was often extended to other communities, which broke with the Fatimid leadership, and at times to the Isma'iliyah in general.

The "Qaramitah" were the first of a series of splits from the main Isma'iliyah, as it in turn established the Fatimid counter-caliphate at Cairo [297/910-909/1171] in opposition to the Sunni majority. Condemned as arch-heresy by orthodox Sunni, the Isma'iliyah were now to become a stream of sub-groups, the already mentioned Qaramitah, Druzes, the Nizariyah, and the Tayyibiyah.

A doctrinal stress of the Ismai'lis is the 'unknowability' of God, who is equivalent to the 'Void' of Gnostic belief whilst Allah who is knowable, is an emanation or the hypostasis of the Abyss, which is symbolised as Light. The physical world however, may be the creation of another manifestation, whose nature in opposition to the first manifestation is evil, and is represented by Darkness. By gnosis, which is held by the Imams and those initiated by them, the hidden Goodness in the world may be known. The consequence is that there is a conflict occurring between good and evil in the world in which 'Ali has a special role and status. The Prophet Muhammad represents the open, spoken or revealed *zahir* knowledge or truth; 'Ali represents the secret or silent aspect of knowledge. Within this perspective the Prophet takes a lesser role to 'Ali becoming the spokesman for 'Ali revealing only part of what 'Ali knows. Finally, the two opposing emanations will merge and in this state of union there will no longer be 'good' and 'evil'.

Following the Fatimid period in Egypt, the Ismai'lis have rarely had the opportunity to exercise political power but have flourished under their Imams, whose authority was endorsed in the time of the British rule in India [Halm: 1991. 191]. As the 'living Imam' the Aga Khan has been able to offer an interpretation of Islam in the modern age.

2.2.8 The Zaydiyah.

Zayd, a son of the Fourth Imam, Zaynu'l-'Abidin made a claim to the Imamate on the grounds that it belonged to any descendant of 'Ali and Fatima who is pious, learned and would come forward to claim the title openly. Alleged to have studied under the Mutazilite founder Wasil ibn Ata, the Zaydiyya tradition came to incorporate elements of Mutazili theology and attracted adherents of that school. Widening the base for this support still further, some Zaydis put forward the concept of *Imamate al-Mafdul*, that a man of lesser excellence might be appointed Imam in the lifetime of a man of greater excellence. By this doctrine, the Zaydiyyahs could justify the appointments of Abu Bakr and Umar as caliphs before the obvious candidature of 'Ali on the grounds of expediency. Thus the companions of the Prophet were exonerated from blame in their rejection of 'Ali as the immediate successor to the Prophet.

Zayd and his half-brother, the fifth Imam Muhammad al-Baqir were in open disagreement over matters of doctrine. The activist approach of Zayd himself initially attracted many Shi'i to his side but as he later compromised increasingly with the Traditionists with their adherence to the validity of the succession of Abu Bakr and Umar to the caliphate, many of the Shi'i returned to al-Baqir [Momen: 1985. 49].

In 122/740, Zayd openly revolted against the caliphate but was killed in its suppression by the caliph Hisham. Zayd's son, Yahya then continued the rebellion from Khurastan but was in turn killed in 125/743.

Because the Zaydiyyah neither accepted an inherited line of Imams, beyond the fact that he should be of the descendants of Hasan and Husayn, nor that the Imam once in office would be protected by divine power from sin and error, there have been periods without legitimate Zaydi Imams. In addition the actual list of such Imams is not fixed though there is general agreement over them. The practice of open declaration of a claim to the Imamate against a perceived illegitimate ruler was followed by a succession of Zaydi Imam-claimants. First amongst these was Muhammad ibn'Abdullah An-Nafs az-Zakiyya, a descendant of Hasan, whose rebellion was suppressed in 145/762 by the Abbasid caliph al-Mansur. Whilst some of his followers affirmed that he had not died but had entered concealment from whence he would return as *Mahdi*, others transferred their loyalty to Muhammad ibn al-Qasim, who was to die imprisoned by the caliph Mu'tasim in 219/834. Subsequent rebellions were equally suppressed until in 250/864 a Zaydi state was established in Tabaristan, in northern Iran by Hasan ibn Zayd. This had lapsed by 300/914. Another such state was established in the same region by Hasan ibn 'Ali al-Utrush in 301/913, which endured until 424/1032. Another expression of this *Mahdi* ideal appeared in the Sudanese movement, which engulfed General Gordon in 1886. A further Zaydi state was founded in the Yemen in 288/901 by the Imam Yahya al-Hadi ila al-Haqq, which survived through the Ottoman Empire period. The last Zaydi Imam, Muhammad al-Badr succumbed to a revolution in 1340/1962, leaving a Zaydi community existing to the present in the northern highlands of the region [Rykmans: 1960].

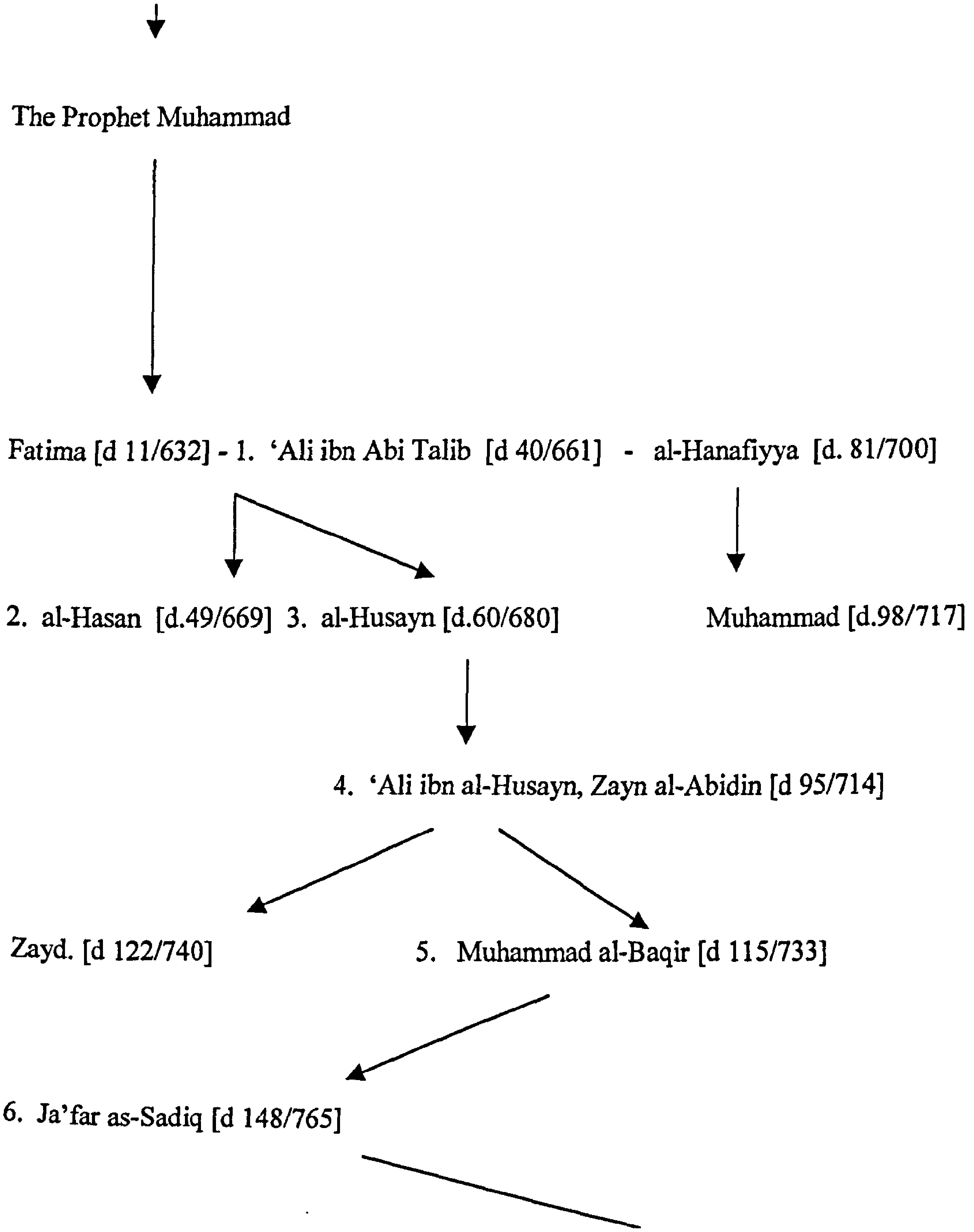
2.2.9 The Ithna Ashariya [The Twelver Shi'a].

Known also by their Arabic name *Ithna Ashariya* the Twelver Shi'a form the largest grouping within Shi'i Islam and their moderate juridical and theological doctrine has placed them at the center of the Shi'a spectrum. So much so that they are often identified as Shi'ism as such.

For all Shi'a, the person and being of the Imam is central and necessary for the continuation of the world and of human history. According to a well-known Shi'a *Hadith* "the earth shall never be destitute of the proof *hujjah* of God" [Momem: 1985. 150], namely the Imam. According to Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Imam in line from 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, the Imams are God's witnesses upon earth, his 'signs' [*'alamat*], those who are 'firm in knowledge' [*al-rasikhun fi'ilm*] in Qur'anic terms. They are the 'gates' [*abwab*] towards God and his vicegerents upon earth. Possessing perfect knowledge of the Qur'an and all the revealed books in their outward [*zahir*] outward and [*batin*] inward aspects. They also possess the knowledge of God's name [*al-al-a zam*] as well as those 'books' which contain all esoteric knowledge, including the science of the symbolic meaning of the letters of the Arabic alphabet [*al-jafr*]. It is also asserted that on the Night of Power [*lailat ul-Qadr*] when the first revealing of the Qur'an is commemorated, God reveals to the Imams all the events of the year to come. The Imam is chosen by God and the Prophet or by the preceding Imam by a clear designation [*nass i'Ali*] and possesses "initiatory" power [*wilayah*] whilst the prophet has the powers of both prophecy [*nubuwah*] as well as initiation [*wilayah*].

As we have noted above [see 1.2.4 – 1.2.8], the various branches amongst the Shi'a separated from each other principally on the number of Imams which they accepted; the *Ithna Ashariyah* are so called because from them the twelfth Imam is the last in the chain traceable to Imam 'Ali and Fatima. The line of descent may be outlined as follows:

The Twelve Imams: *Ithna Ashariyah.*



The Prophet Muhammad

Fatima [d 11/632] - 1. 'Ali ibn Abi Talib [d 40/661] - al-Hanafiyya [d. 81/700]

2. al-Hasan [d.49/669] 3. al-Husayn [d.60/680] Muhammad [d.98/717]

4. 'Ali ibn al-Husayn, Zayn al-Abidin [d 95/714]

Zayd. [d 122/740] 5. Muhammad al-Baqir [d 115/733]

6. Ja'far as-Sadiq [d 148/765]

Abdallah [d 149/766]; Isma'il [d 138/755]. 7. Musa al-Kazoo [183/799]

↓

8. 'Ali ar-Rida [203/816]

↓

9. Muhammad at-Taqi [or al-Jawad] [d 218/833]

↓

10. 'Ali al-Hadi [d 254/868]

↓

11. Hasan al-Askari [d 260/874]

↓

12. Muhammad al-Mahdi, the Hidden Imam [major occultation 329/941]

[Figure 1].

The Shi'i emphasis upon the Imam is seen not only in the key role given to esoteric hermeneutic of the Qur'an [*ta'wil*] [Amir-Moezzi: 1994. 79] in relation to the power of *wilayah* possessed by the Imam but also in the central function of the Imam in the daily religious life and his eschatological meaning [Kohlberg: 1976. 528] Shi'i Muslims must know their Imam for salvation, and the Imams as well as the Prophet can intercede for believers before God at the day of Judgement. Thus the Imam is a living link and mediator between the believer, the community and God, a source of grace and source of knowledge. The Imam therefore is a transhistorical reality not simply a key figure of faith in the past.

This ever present reality of the Imam's presence is felt and affirmed pre-eminently in the role of the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, who in Twelver belief is in occultation [*ghayba*] [Arjomand: 1984. 39ff]. The Imam entered minor occultation [*al-ghayba al-sughra*] in 260/874 during which time he had direct representatives amongst his followers; beginning in 329/941 he went into major occultation [*al-ghayba al-akubra*] which has lasted until the present time and during which period any institutionalized channels of communication with his followers are no longer accessible. This state is not one of being hidden *per se* but rather it signifies a miraculous mode of existence for the Imam, who whilst being alive and sharing in this worldly patterns of experience, actually lives in a higher realm of existence. He is the ruler of the universe and the Lord of the Hour [*sahib al-zaman*], the pole upon which religion stands [*qa'im*] and the guarantee for the preservation and continuation of tradition. He is also affirmed in Twelver Shi'i belief to be the guide to the spiritual world and he appears in person to those who have the appropriate qualifications to see him. In this sense devout Twelver Shi'i would pray for a vision of the Twelvth Imam and the sites where such appearances have occurred have often become sanctuaries and sacred places to which the faithful make pilgrimage as much as they would visit the tombs of the other Imams.

Shi'i eschatological belief also focuses upon the Twelvth Imam. Known as the *Mahdi,* it is expected that he will emerge from occultation at a time when oppression and iniquity in the world will have reached their peak. 'Ali seems to have predicted that al-Mahdi would wear:

> ...the armour of wisdom...if Islam is in trouble he will feel forlorn like a traveller...He is the last of Allah's proofs.

['Ali ibn Abu Talib: 1984. Sermon 4].

In destroying evil, the *Mahdi* will establish the rule of justice in accord with divine law, and reveal the inner unity of religions. Alongside this, the *Mahdi* will prepare for the second coming of the Christ with which the present world order and history will culminate. This is a key devotional pattern and prayer amongst Twelver Shi'i, which suffuses Twelver faith with a strong messianic perspective that has permeated into many political and non-political forms over the centuries. It is also current as a feature of most Sufi streams and circles.

The constitution of the Iranian Republic, as declared after the overthrow of the Shah in 1357/1979, is based upon Twelver Shi'a principles. Following the end of the line of *wakil* between the Hidden Imam and the people, the Twelver community was faced with the problem faced by the first generation of Islam viz, how should the *ummah* be led and governed once its leader is absent.

In principle, the Shi'a are still under the guidance of the Hidden Imam, a role no-one can usurp [Richard: 1995. 45]. The solution which emerged in Twelver Shi'ism in Iran and elsewhere was a professional, learned clerical class [often hereditary and close to the mercantile class], who whilst fallible could offer interpretations of the Qur'an and thus the correct Islamic position on Law or practice *ijtihad.*

Parallel to this, most Sunni traditions also believe in the coming of the *Mahdi* but this belief is not such an article of faith; amongst the Twelver Shi'i the identity of the *Mahdi* is both known and the expectation of his coming colours the ethos of the tradition and influences its manifestations from the theological to the political.

2.3 The Position of 'Ali within the Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* tradition.

2.3.1 The Barelwi [*Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at*].

The formative period of this movement occurred in the late 19th century and early 20th century in north India under British colonial rule. It is a period of time, which coincides, with the formative leadership of Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan [1856-1921] from the 1880's until his death. He drew upon earlier movements but saw his expression as unique in defending traditional beliefs and practices.

The Barelwi or more accurately the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa Jama'at* [the People of the custom of the community] movement were one of several renewal or reformist streams such as the Deoband and Ahl i-Hadith originating in the same time and colonial context. The *Ahl i-Sunnat* however, held more preservationist convictions for traditional Islam and their interaction with these other streams and indeed with the British government was distinctly apolitical. Ahmad Riza Khan directed his considerable energies and abilities towards opposing any who were critical of traditional Muslim practices and beliefs.

The *Ahl i-Sunnat* focussed their concerns on the qualities of the Prophet Muhammad, who was portrayed as having total knowledge of spiritual truth and seen as unique amongst all humanity; the permissibility or otherwise of prayer to, and the intercession of deceased saints [*pirs*]; or the appropriate and correct manner of calling believers to the mosque for Friday prayers [Sanyal: 1996. 2].

Ahmad Riza Khan and the *Ahl i-Sunnat* ulama entered into controversy with the other Sunni groups [Robinson: 1994ed: 269] already mentioned but also with the *Tablighi Jama'at* [Haq: 1972], the *Ahmadiyya* movement [Friedmann: 1989] and the Nadwat al-Ulama. The *Ahl i-Sunnat* ulama wished to preserve Islam as it had evolved 'unchanged; not as it was idealized in texts or the historical past' [Schimmel: 1985. 229].

Defensive and traditionalist, the ulama not only maintained a separate identity from other emerging streams of a more reformist character but also established its own madrassahs to form future leaders. In relation to political activities, the personal and pietist orientation of its first leader led the movement to avoid action which might have been interpreted as confrontative with the ruling powers. Drawing support from largely rural and less well educated constituencies than the urban classes attracted by the Deoband, the *Ahl i-Sunnat* defended its conservative religious practices against those advocating reform and offering a return to the early models of Islamic purity and authority. Raza Khan used traditional Hadith sources and firmly placed 'Ali as one of the 'four righteous caliphs', who had been correctly elected in due order of precedence.

2.3.2 Hadith Perceptions of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib

2.3.2.1 Hadith traditions.

The *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad is a vast literary genre comprising brief, individual statements attributed to him. A second term, almost synonymous and applied in relation to him is the *Sunnah,* which refers to a usage described in a *hadith* [singular] of the Prophet's activity. The validity of any *hadith* is attested by a chain *isnad* of narrators or transmitters from the earliest to the latest by whom the document or statement has been handed-on from one generation to another and upon whom the authenticity or 'support' for the saying rests [Burton: 1994. ix]. With the Qur'an, the Hadith and the Sunnah form the foundation for Muslim political, social and theological thought.

In the Sunni traditions there are six collections of Hadith, which relate to the Prophet and are regarded as having been passed on by his companions as canonical. Within the Shi'a tradition however, the majority of the companions in having accepted the succession of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman prior to that of 'Ali are seen as having fallen into error. Consequently, their reliability as transmitters of hadith is weakened and brought under question. Shi'a traditionists trace what they consider as reliable Hadith to one of the Imamate and thence to the Prophet himself. Based on the concept that both the Prophet and the Imams are infallible and *ma'sum* protected from error and sin the *isnad* held within the Shi'a provenance is therefore held to be reliable.

However, for all Muslim scholars it had become clear by the end of the Umayyad period that the appearance of Hadith traditions was being marked by fabrication [Momem: 1985. 174 & Mernissi: 1987. 42]. The result was the creation of a fresh school of religious science devoted to the examination of the *isnads* of Hadith as to their authenticity. Four classifications were created: *sahih* correct, *hasan* good, *muwaththaq* trustworthy, and *da'if* weak. The exact criteria for the grouping of material were not precise and varied from one scholar to another. In addition, the Hadith were classified as *mutawatir* successive or traditions handed on through several generations of transmitters considered as reliable and thus genuinely from the lifetime of the Prophet and the Imams; and *khabar al-walid* as traditions known only to one chain of transmitters. The former were seen as bearing a binding force with the latter sufficient for guidance.

For the Shi'a the texts that have gained authority as canonical are attributed to the 'three Muhammads' in the Buhwaihid period [932-1055] post the Abbasid regime. Muhammad al-Kulayni [d.328/939] with *Al-Kafi fi 'Ilm ad-Din* The Sufficient in the Science of Religion [al-Kulayni: 1961 & 1959]. Muhammad ibn Babuya [d. 381/991] *Man la yahduruhu al-Faqih* He who has no jurist present [ibn Babuya: 1908], and Muhammad al-Tusi [d. 460/1067] in two collections in *Tahdhib al-Akham* The Rectification of Judgements, and *Al-Istibsar* The Perspicacious [at-Tusi: 1956 & 1960]. The formation of collections such as these required in addition biographical dictionaries. Three are particularly significant with Ahmad ibn 'Ali al-Najashi's *Rijal* [al-Najashi: 1317], Muhammad ibn 'Umar al-Kashshi's *ar-Rijal* [al-Kashshi: 1899], and Shaykhu't-Ta'ifa *al-Fihrist* and *Nadad al-Idah* [Ta'ifa: 1972].

2.3.2.2 In Shi'a traditions.

In Western scholarship there has been relatively minimum attention within given to the development of a distinctly Shi'a body of Hadith and legal patterns deriving from them [Newman: 2000. xiv]. This is surprising given that as Shi'ism did evolve as a tradition, its Jaf'ari legal school was of considerable significance for its separate identity.

During the Umayyad period censorship functioned in respect to Hadith that were in circulation. Donaldson cites Guillaume as stating on the authority of al-Tabari that:

> ...Mu'awiya I ordered that all hadith favourable to the house of 'Ali be suppressed, and that the glories of the family of 'Uthman be extolled. The Umayyad hand is perhaps most clearly seen in the traditions, which were forged to emphasise the sanctity of Jerusalem *vis-à-vis* Mecca and Medina.
>
> [Donaldson: 1933. 282].

Public sentiment and opinion were crucial in deciding which traditions were in circulation. In some parts of the Umayyad empire, Hadith favouring the household of the Prophet and 'Ali were acceptable in the first days of the Abbasids. The final chapter of the Sunni traditionist al-Tirmidhi's *Sahih* [al-Tirmidhi: 1875] was focused upon the 'Virtues of the Household of the Prophet', and within the six canonical Sunni writers there were references to exalt 'Ali [Donaldson: 1933. 283].

A major impetus however, towards the evolution of a Shi'a legal school came in the advent of the Abbasid dynasty. Now, for sympathisers with 'Alid claims to the caliphate it seemed that with the new rule there was a possibility of the Prophet's line being installed into political and religious power afresh. When in fact the new regime did not meet such expectations and disillusionment set in amongst 'Alid partisans the result was not military opposition but a move to define Shi'a identity in tension with the Abbasids and with Sunni Islam in general. Jurist scholars led the way in these moves which resulted in the collection of Hadith for the Shi'a communities.

2.3.2.3 The Development of Hadith.

The evolution of Islamic Law began in the latter stages of the Umayyad Dynasty. Certainly, from the time of the Prophet questions on legal issues had been addressed on a rather ad hoc basis meeting the new circumstances that confronted the nascent and expanding Muslim *ummah.* For the solutions devised, Qur'anic answers and injunctions were often found and utilised, supported by local customs and integrating the existing legal/administrative rulings of the newly annexed territories.

During the last years of the Umayyad era however, scholars began to associate with one another to formulate a pattern of guidance for correct Muslim behaviour. Their aims were to create a systematic pattern of Law, its Islamisation, and to universalise its application on the whole of the Islamic world. In addition to these foundations of the Qur'an, local custom, and the initial developments of forming a legal code there was the use of personal opinion *ra'y* from the first scholarly generation. From them emerged the 'schools of law' and the sense of a 'living tradition' associated with each development. In time, this 'tradition' came to be focused under the name of the leading scholar of that school viz. Abu Hanifa [d. 145/767], Malik ibn Anas [d. 173/795] and al-Awa'i [d. 152/774]. From the early eighth century a move occurred to give the legal formulae of the *'ulama* more authority by retrospectively attributing them to earlier notable scholars. In such a way a continuity was created with the first generation of Islam. Thus the Kufan school 'adopted' Ibrahim al-Nakha'i as their authority with the Medinan school taking'Abd Allah ibn 'Utba, Sa'id ibn al-Musayyib and 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr as their authorities. These figures were considered to have had their legal opinions and decisions based on even earlier traditions. The Kufans traced a line back to 'Ali ibn Abu Talib himself and to two close companions of the Prophet in Ibn Mas'ud and 'Umar ibn al-Khattab. A further development came in the period just before the accession to power of the Abbasids as strong support was given to disregard the use of *ra'y* and to rely on the sayings of the Prophet as a foundation for legal opinions. This was generally accepted as a compelling argument and thousands of Hadith attributed to the Prophet came to light to provide a basis for legal formulations.

The result was that the codes of Law came to be evolved on early formulations, local usage and customs, the Qur'an, independent reasoning, and authoritative traditions, with the consequence that Hadith statements grew in number. The importance of the *isnad* 'chain of transmission' became increasingly significant as the authority or reliability of the transmitter gave added weight and authority to the legal formulations based upon the very Hadith in question.

Thus the appearance of the Hadith genre gave for the first time within Islam a method for all groups and streams, a means of expressing their distinctive perspectives. This included the law schools as much as particular emphases, who could all begin to relate their beliefs to statements linked ultimately to the Prophet himself. The Shi'a were amongst these movements who could therefore seek the legitimisation of their position from an irreproachable authority.

2.3.2.4 The Shi'a and Hadith.

Before the early Abbasid caliphate and thence the generations of Malik ibn Anas and Abu Hanifa there is little evidence that the Shi'a movement had developed an autonomous legal expression. During the pre-Abbasid era Shi'ism as a movement was diffuse in nature with a focus upon devotion to the Prophet's family and the claims to the caliphate by descendants of the Prophet through 'Ali and Fatima. Some of the early Shi'a groups did form coherent doctrinal perspectives and will have developed ethical codes for their followers. There are examples of Hadith proposed by the Shi'a during the Umayyad caliphate, which reflect concern with the position of the 'Alid lineage and focus especially upon 'Ali ibn Abu Talib. Surrounding Imam 'Ali a genre of writing developed which extolled his virtues *fada'il,* and following Shi'a emphases, related how he had been the first to accept Islam after the Prophet's call and proclamation. They continued to affirm how he had saved the Prophet's life prior to the *Hijrah, and* had accompanied the Prophet during his *miraj,* the ascent to heaven. There are also Hadith recording that he had had been designated at Ghadir Khumm as the Prophet's successor.

Such Hadith were incorporated into Sunni collections due to reverence for the *Ahl i-Bayt* but also because later traditionists could not question them once they had been attested as valid by reputable authorities and accepted by the general community at large. There were attempts however, to downplay those traditions which affirmed the succession of 'Ali by offering contrasting statements.

The Hadith al-Thaqalayn relates that on returning from his last pilgrimage the Prophet Muhammad paused at the Ghadir Khumm and announced:

Of whomever I am his master, 'Ali also is his master *mawla.*

[ibn Hanbal: 1313/1896. 1. 300].

There are several Sunni traditionists who have recorded this tradition in their works including Al-Tirmidhi *Sahih* [Bulkaq, 1292. II. 298], Al-Hakim in *Mustadrak* [Hyderabad, 1313] in *bab Fada'il ashab Rasul Allah* from al-Bara' ibn 'Azib and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad* [al-Matba'at al-Maymaniyyah, Egypt 1313] from al-Bara' ibn 'Azib [IV, 281], Buraydab al-'Aslami [V, 347, 350,358], Zayd ibn Arqam [IV. 372, IV. 368, V. 307].

A second hadith is recorded by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* [al-Matba'at al-Khayriyyah, Egypt 1320] in *Kitab bad' al-khalq, Bab manaqib 'Ali ibn Abu Talib* and *Bab ghazwat Tabuk:*

Are you not pleased to have the position *manzilah* in relation to me as that Aaron had in relation to Moses?

[al-Bukhari: 1320].

Amongst the Sunni traditionists accepting this hadith were Muslim in his *Sahih* [Matba'at Bulaq, 1290] *Kitab fada'il al-Sahabah* citing three *isnads* al-Tirmidhi in his

Sahih II. 301, ibn Majah in his *Sunan,* 12, and al-Hakim in *Mustradrak,* II. 337. Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal in his *Musnad* I. 29, 170, 173-175., and al-Tabari in his *Tari'kh al-'umam wa al-muluk* [Cairo, Matba'at al-'Istiqamah 1357] II. 368.

A third hadith is cited by al-Tirmidhi in his *Sahih,* II. 297.

Verily, 'Ali and I are inseparable, and he is the master *wali* of every believer after me. [al-Tirmidhi: 1875 .II. 297].

Sunni traditionists affirm this hadith including it in their collections. Al-Hakim in *Mustradak,* III. 130-131, Abu Nu'aym in *Hilyah,* VI. 339, and al-Khatib in *Ta'rikh Baghdad,* II. 171.

A noted hadith relating to the role 'Ali is given within Sufi traditions is recorded by al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* III. 126-127.

I am the city of knowledge and 'Ali is its gate; whoever intends to enter the city should come to its gate.

[al-Hakim: n.d. III, 126-127].

Sunni collectors recorded this saying: al-Khatib in *Ta'rikh Baghdad,* II, 348, 377; VII, 172; XI, 48-49, al-Muhibb al-Taban in *al-Riyad al-Nadirah,* II. 193.

Another hadith narrated by al-Tabari in *al-Riyad al-Nadirah* on the authority of Salman from the Prophet is crucial to understandings of the Prophet and 'Ali amongst Shi'a and Sufi influenced Sunni streams relates:

> Fourteen thousand years before Adam – upon whom be peace – was created, I and 'Ali were a light in the presence of God. When God created Adam – upon whom be peace – He divided it into two parts. I am one of the parts and 'Ali is the other part.
>
> [al-Tabari: 1881. II. 163].

Numerous Shi'a scholars endorsed the statement such as: al-Kulayni in *al-Kafi* from Abu Ja'far al-Thani and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, Muhammad ibn al-'Abbas ibn Mahyar in *Ma nazala min al-Qur'an fi Ahl al-Bayt.* But Sunni collectors also record the saying such as Ahmad ibn Hanbal in *al-Fada'il,* and Sibt ibn al-Jawzi in *Tadhkirat al-Khawass,* 46.

The evidence indicates therefore, that during the early Abbasid period a distinctively Shi'a body of Hadith and legal premises began to appear. The new dynasty had to seek legitimation and consolidation of their authority. This included the gaining of support from the military as well as from interested groups such as the *'ulama.* It was also essential to create an ideological and theological rationale for the new regime. Essentially, the Abbasids had come to power not through an organised pattern of protest or reform but with economic and social grievances against the Umayyad rule providing the grounds for supplanting the old dynasty. The new authority also however, drew upon ideas and symbols normally linked with Shi'a tendencies. The rationale behind the evolution had in fact contained ideas of revenge for the deaths of Imams Hasan and Husayn as well as the other 'Alid line martyrs, a call to reinstate one from the line of the Prophet as caliph, who was not designated. But known as *Al-Rida min Al Muhammad.* It was inevitable that with the affiliation to the 'Alid line and the seeking of a legitimate representative from that family that it would be closely associated with the 'Alids.

The Abbasids were swift to capitalise on genealogical ties with the descendants of the Prophet to legitimate their claims to authority. The initial Abbasid stress that they possessed the credentials to rule on the basis of their links to Muhammad's family and thus his genuine heirs. In an inauguration address in Kufa, Abu'l-Abbas al-Saffab made such a claim,

> Praise be to God who distinguished us as relatives of the Prophet of God and his close kin, who raised us up from among his ancestors, grew us from his tree, originated us from his source and endeared him to our hearts.
>
> [al-Tabari: 1881. 3/1. 31].

However, such claims were not undisputed. In the context of rebellion some twelve years later Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya is alleged to have challenged the caliph, al-Mansur [754/136-775/158] on the Abbasid right to govern.

> You pretended that this affair was ours, rose up for it with our partisans and acquired our merit even though our forefather 'Ali was the trustee and the Imam. So how could you inherit his authority while his descendants are still alive? You were aware that no one who had sought this affair had our lineage, honour, status and the nobility of our forefathers...None of the Banu Hashim possess the same close kinship [with the Prophet], precedence [in Islam] and merit as we do.
>
> [al-Tabari: 1881. 3/1. 31].

The Abbasid reaction was to deny that that the succession had been rightfully passed through Fatima to her sons and thence to he succeeding Imams. The precedence of an uncle over a daughter, in this assertion the right of the Prophet's paternal uncle and al-

Mansur's great grandfather, al-'Abbas to inherit the Prophet's status is made. In consequence this right is transmitted onto the Abbasid line. Ibn Khaldun commented:

> Their [the Abbasids] right to power is often supported by the argument that their right goes back to al-'Abbas. He was alive at the time of Muhammad's death, and he had the best title to become Muhammad's heir because of the group feeling attached to paternal uncles.
>
> [ibn Khaldun: 1958. 1. 410].

To counter the Shi'a sympathisers the Abbasids drew upon and created traditions which indicated that the claims of al-'Abbas were stronger than those of 'Ali to the succession issue. One such tradition has the Prophet saying to al-'Abbas,

> You are my uncle, the twin brother of my father, and the best of those of my family who will leave offspring after me.
>
> [al-Khatib: 1931. 5. 63].

In another tradition the Prophet is portrayed reprimanding 'Ali for a quarrel with al-'Abbas and states that the descendants of al-'Abbas will in fact inherit the caliphate. In the tradition 'Ali is used to authenticate this Hadith. In a further tradition, it says that al-'Abbas asked 'Ali to enquire of the Prophet on who would succeed and inherit the Prophet's authority after him. 'Ali is shown as replying that al-'Abbas would inherit the authority [ibn 'Asakir: 1979. 7. 245-247]. The Abbasids promoted a counter claim to the Shi'a/'Alids for the validity of their rule. Assertions were made on behalf of al-Mansur that he had inherited *'ilm* from his ancestors, which had been recorded in writing and preserved, which related past events and foretold the future. Reference is also made to a scroll, which it was said, had belonged to 'Ali, and thence inherited by Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya, and in turn his son 'Abd Allah ibn Muhammad, who bequeathed it to the Abbasids. This document again contained prophetic details for the future. Such claims are similar to, and competitive with Shi'a claims for Ja'far al-Sadiq, who is also said to have possessed 'Ali's book [al-Majlisi: 1983. 47. 271-272] together with other gnostic texts such as Fatima's scroll [al-Majlisi: 1983. 47. 270-271, 272-273] and the Scroll of Abraham and Moses [al-Majlisi: 1983. 47. 270]. In a further attempt to adopt Shi'a concepts al-Mansur gave to his son and heir the title of *al-Mahdi,* which not only referred to the expected eschatological figure but was also the title accorded to the pro-'Alid Muhammad al-Nafs al-Zakiyya during the caliphate of al-Mansur.

The creation of an ideology to legitimise their assumption of power and to seek support from pro-'Alid Shi'a groups was essential to the Abbasids. Ultimately however, their rule was based upon the de facto holding of power and the use of force to substantiate it. Any recompense for the injustices of the Umayyad period failed and the Abbasids were in turn seem to be self-serving and acting contrary to the expectations of the faithful. The new governing class violently removed not only as many of the Umayyad regime as possible but also in turn many of the supporters of the rebellion [al-Tabari: 1881. 3/1. 122 & 135]. The new government also proved itself to be different from Arab ideals with its non-Arab ruling elite and government structures drawn from the eastern provinces of the empire. The new regime seemed as worldly and distant as the previous and any sense of them being the 'heirs of the Prophet' who would initiate social justice became less and less credible. Even the pro-Shi'a premises upon which the Abbasids had risen seemed to apply more than ever to the lineage of 'Ali and Fatima, which was endorsed in turn as the rightful claimants to the caliphate.

The Abbasids sought to circumvent any direct challenge to their rule by asserting that the 'Alids had surrendered their claim to the *khilaphat.* It was asserted that Abu Hashim, son of Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya bequeathed the 'Alid claim to the Imamate to an Abbasid and that this succession had been assumed by the Abbasids until that time. It was seen however, that the 'Alid line still held a claim to the Imamate and overt Abbasid claims as a result were modified. The Abbasids however, had assumed power upon some tenets of pro-Shi'a sentiments and these could not easily be renounced once power had been assumed. The *Al-Rida min Al Muhammad* was expected and the Abbasids had to ensure their claims to authority were based upon genealogical links to the Prophet's family.

Opposition in either military or political forms was unfeasible by Shi'a sympathetic groups in the face of the Abbasid control on power. The Khurasanian revolt made the new regime cautious about emphasising its previous promises of pro-'Alid views. However, challenges could be made on the level of ideas with its centre in Kufa long associated with pro-Shi'a activity.

During the Umayyad era it had been enough to assert that a member of the Line of the Prophet, through 'Ali and Fatima should be caliph. As in a sense the Abbasid family provided a part fulfilment of that aspiration definite opposition to the Abbasids formed itself into alleging that the new dynasty had in fact developed upon very different premises to its original ideas. Consequently, critics of the Abbasids formulated a more rigorous definition of the Imamate with fresh proposals appearing in Hisham ibn al-Hakam's *Kitab al-Imama,* Muhammad ibn al-Khalil's *Kitab al-Imama,* and 'Ali ibn Ra'ib Abu'l-Hasan's *Kitab al-Wasiyya wa'l-Imama.* Alongside doctrinal development there were also moves to strengthen and define a body of religio-legal standards drawn from the 'Alid line. This, together with the desire to define the natures of the Imamate, was intended to give distinctive form to the Imamate and to provide it with a spiritual authority, which was being seen as forfeited by the Abbasids for all their claims to inheritance from the Prophet and his line.

By the time of the Abbasids the *Sunnah* of the Prophet had begun to take shape in the form of Hadith collections traced to the Prophet. The Sunni tradition gave particular authority to the works of 'Abd al-Malik ibn 'Abd al-Aziz [d. 145767] in Mecca, Ibn Ishaq [d, 145/767] in Medina, Ma'mar ibn Rashid [d. 158/770] in the Yemen, Sa'id ibn Abi 'Aruba [d. 151/773] and Rabi' ibn Sabih [d. 155/777] in Basra, and Yahya ibn Zakariyya ibn Abi Za'ida [d. 165/789] in Kufa. These legal formulations were being created by scholars independent of the state so the Abbasids again found themselves being circumvented by the emerging *'ulama* as the guides and teachers of the community and thus undermined. The Shi'a groups in addition were to benefit from this absence of control by the authorities over the creation of legal schools and traditions. They could in contrast claim the prerogative of control by the Imamate and indeed the innovation of law by the Imams of the 'Alid line. Most significant in this evolution was the figure of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq [80/699-148/765].

In the time of al-Sadiq, Kufa became a key centre for Shi'a endeavour in Hadith collection. The first collections amongst Shi'a scholars were termed *usul* 'sources'

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[al-Najashi: nd. 148], and Muhammad ibn Muslim Rabbah *al-Arba 'Mi'at Mas'ala fi Abwab al-Halal wa'l Haram.*

Other works, which from their titles were most likely to be concerned with legal matters, were also composed by contemporaries of al-Sadiq and by those said to be transmitters of his Hadith. Amongst these are *Anwa'al-Fiqh* from Thabit ibn Shurayh [al-Najashi: nd. 87], *Kitab fi Anwa'min al-Fiqh wa'l-Qadaya* by Sa'id ibn Ab'l-Jahm al-Qabusi [al-Najashi: nd. 128], *al-Qadaya* by Muhammad ibn Qays 'Abd Allah al-Bajali [al-Najashi: nd. 226], *Kitab 'Ilal al-Shara'I* by Mufaddal ibn Umar [al-Najashi: nd. 296], *Kitab fi'l-Halal wa'l Haram* by 'Abd Allah ibn Hiskan [al-Najashi: nd. 148], and the *Kitab al-Shara'I* and *Kitab Ikhtilaf al-Hadith* by Yunus 'Abd al-Rahman [al-Tusi: nd. 181].

The canonical formation of Shi'a Hadith emerged much later than these legal formulations with the works of al-Kulayni [d.328/939] such as *Al Kafi fi'ilm al-Din,* and Ibn Babawayh's [d. 369/991] *Man la yahduruhu al-Faqih,* and al-Tusi's [d. 460/1067] *Tahdhib al-Ahkam.* It is clear however, that Shi'a collections of legal works were contemporary with the Sunni parallel documentation. Traditionists such as Ibn Jurayj [d. 145/767] from Mecca, Malik ibn Anas [d.163/795] in Madhinah, and Yahya ibn Zakariyya' ibn Abi Za'ida [d. 176/798] in Kufa, had their works acknowledged and accepted by Sunni circles.

The period of al-Sadiq can be considered as a fruitful one for Shi'a legal and scholarly activity. A clue to this is the term *fuquaha* used both by al-Najashi and al-Kashshi to describe the transmitters of Hadith from al-Sadiq. The term *faqih* was initially used to describe a person of understanding and intelligence whilst later it was used to describe a theologian and then as one with a particular understanding of the religious law. Amongst the *fuqaha* mentioned are Zurara ibn 'Ayan [d. 145/767] [al-Najashi: nd. 125 & 1970. 375], 'Abd Allah ibn Bukayr [al-Najashi: nd. 154 & 1970: 345, 375], 'Ammar al-Sabati [Al-Najashi: nd. 206 & 1970: 345], Jamil ibn Darraj [al-Najashi: nd 92 & 1970: 375], Hammad ibn 'Isa [d. 201/823-24] [al-Najashi: nd. 103 & 1970: 375], Hammad ibn 'Uthman [d. 184/806] [al-Najashi: nd. 104 & 1970: 375], Aban ibn 'Uthman [al-Najashi: nd. 10 & 1970: 375], Tha'laba ibn Maymun [al-Najashi: nd. 85 & 1970. 375] [the latter three from Kufa], and Aban ibn Taglib [d. 136/758] [al-Najashi: nd. 7-8].

The earliest traditionists and jurists amongst the developing and increasingly defined Shi'a movement emphasised the claims of 'Ali's descendants to the caliphate and a devotion to him and his line. In other respects however, the Shi'a groups accepted in parallel with the Sunni traditions the legal extrapolations and rituals that were evolving within Islam in general. Before the, the Abbasid assumption of power the different Shi'a strands had not been able to collect and create a distinctive Shi'a corpus of legal, ritual and doctrinal Hadith. In fact, such groups would not have held materials different from the Sunni majority.

In the last period of Umayyad rule, Shi'ism had been relatively quiescent receiving a major renewal of purpose once the Abbasids had gained authority. With the failure of the Khurasanian rebellion to install, in Shi'a eyes, a genuine descendant of 'Ali and Fatima to the *khilafat* then a more clear cut definition of the Shi'a position became essential. When in time the Abbasids failed to initiate an hoped-for era of justice enhanced the Shi'a position and ideals. The appearance of Hadith collections also inspired fresh articulations of faith, which led to more a systematic Shi'a expression of belief and legal positions.

Evidently, the period of the first Abbasids paralleling the Imamate of al-Sadiq brought together factors which encouraged the emergence of a Shi'a corpus of Hadith with their emphasis on 'Ali and the *Ahl i-Bayt.* These developments also allowed the formulation of devotion to 'Ali and moulded subsequent themes and concepts. The merging of these sundry facets accelerated the formation of the distinctive Shi'a identity, which arguably may have dissipated itself. The Imamate was rationalised as the key source of doctrinal beliefs and indeed Hadith statements, which in turn were to legitimate the Shi'a orthodoxy and to set boundaries for the extremists.

The rise of the Buwayid dynasty from 320/932 brought the Shi'a into clear favour and some sense of ascendancy after the Abbasid period. In the new order the Imamate was seen in an exalted status, both the previous regimes were excoriated and the collections of traditions were completed. The fact that the four specifically Shi'ite collections were not complied until this era whereas the Sunni Hadith had been brought together a generation before, is compensated for in Shi'a eyes by virtue of their attribution to the infallible Imams. Thus, for the first time in their identifiable history, the Shi'a had the support of a sympathetic dynasty.

Chapter 2.

2.4 'Ali the Wali of God.

2.4.1 The Three Tenet Confession of Faith: *Shahadah.*

In the Shi'i tradition, 'Ali is the bearer of many attributes some descriptive whilst others are of a more esoteric nature. These include for example, *hujja* - proof of God; *bab* - gateway to God; *amin* - trustee of the knowledge [*ilm*] of God; *khazim* - repository of the secrets of God; *wazi* - the inheritor of Muhammad; *warita* - heir of all the prophets; *shafi* - intercessor for his people before God; and *wali* - the friend of God. This latter ascription for 'Ali is a key understanding of his identity and status especially amongst the Shi'i streams of Islam.

In its origins, the 'Party of 'Ali' and thence Twelver-Shi'ism had like Sunnism developed and proclaimed its faith through the two tenet *Shahadah* . Whereas however, the Sunni tradition retained the two tenet declaration viz. belief in One God, and the commission of Muhammad as the Prophet of God [Wensinck: 1932. 15-22, 270-275], Twelver-Shi'ism added a third phrase affirming belief in 'Ali as the *wali* [saint or friend of God]. Consequently, the Twelver-Shi'i form of the witness to faith states:

I bear witness that there is no God but Allah;
and I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah;
and bear witness that 'Ali is the *wali* of God.

[Hollister: 1955. 49].

The term *wali* is being used not only as 'friend of God' i.e. someone who intercedes for others consonant with Sunni practice but also implicitly as an heir of Muhammad. Such a person is nominated by God and the Prophet himself to continue Muhammad's mission of guiding believers in both spiritual and temporal matters, and whose personality is without fault [*insan*], infallible [*ijma*] and equal in status to the Prophet himself except in the matter of his office as prophet/messenger [*nabi - rasul*].

Such affirmation of 'Ali's *wilayah* [friendship with God] and its association with belief in the One God and the Prophetic standing of Muhammad, is endorsed by Twelver-Shi'i jurists' interpretation of various Qur'anic texts such as Surah 5. 60:

> Your friend can only be Allah and His Messenger and those who believe, and those who believe, who establish and pay the poor-due, and bow in worship.
>
> [S 5. 60].

The jurists interpret the phrase 'bow down in worship' as referring to 'Ali using the story that a poor man was begging in the mosque of Medina whilst the Prophet, 'Ali and others were at prayer. No one responded to him except 'Ali, who in the midst of the prayers gave the man his ring. Tabarsi [Tabarsi: 1379/1339. III. 209-212] comments on the authority of Abu Daharr that at the very instant that 'Ali gave the ring to the poor man, the Prophet prayed to God to assist him in his burdens of leadership just as Moses had prayed and God had 'strengthened his arm' [Exodus 4. 14-17] by appointing Aaron to help him. Then the angel Gabriel came to Muhammad and revealed Surah 28. 4- 5.

Contemporary Twelver-Shi'i regard the three tenet *Shahadah* as a statement of their creed which *mu'adhdhins* affirm thereby distinguishing Twelver-Shi'ism from

Sunnism [Von Eliash: 1971: 268]. However, the Twelver-Shi'is writings of the third to fifth centuries AH do not reveal when such a three tenet credal statement began. There are for example, no references in the four early canonical documents of Twelver *fiqh*, with the single exception of *Man la Yahdaruhu aql-Faqih*, which condemns its usage firmly [al-Sadduq: 1334/1915. 59]. As the earliest Twelver jurists draw attention to differences between themselves and their Sunni counterparts on the *adhan* and the daily forms of *salah* this cannot be due to dissembling [*taqiyyah*]. Both in the *adhan* and the *salah* the four Twelver canonical books give the wording of the *Shahadah* as similar to that used by the Sunni tradition:

God is most Great [4 x times];
I bear witness that there is no God but the One God [2x times]
I bear witness that Muhammad is the Prophet of God; [2 x times]
Come to prayer,
Come to the best of deeds;
God is most Great; [2 x times]
There is no God but the One God.

[al-Kulini: 1302/1884. 83-85; 135-138].

Clearly there were controversies between the orthodox Twelver-Shi'i stream and the Ghulat groups with their exaltations of both the Prophet and 'Ali. Al-Sadduq comments [al-Sadduq: 1334/1915. 59]:

"This is the true *adhan*. There is nothing to be added and there is nothing to be taken away. The *mufawwidah* [1], may God curse them, have forged traditions and have added additions to the *adhan*. [Thus some of them add] Muhammad and the House of Muhammad are the best of creation, twice. And in some of their quotations [traditions], after, I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God, I bear witness that 'Ali is the *wali* of God, twice. Some of them state, instead of that, I bear witness that 'Ali is truly the commander of the Faithful, twice. There is no doubt that 'Ali is the *wali* of God, that he is truly the Commander of the Faithful and that Muhammad and his House are the best of Creation, but [all] this is not in the original *adhan*. I have mentioned this so that those who are suspected of *tafwid* and who with deception include themselves in our community may be made known"

The actual introduction of a three tenet *Shahadah* amongst the Twelver-Shi'i may only have occurred with the advent of the Safavid dynasty [Sedden; 1931. 26]. This superseded the customs and prohibitions against such a practice as promulgated in the canonical texts of the *Ja'fari fiqh* . In fact this innovation was more a political initiative of Shah Ismai'l in 907/1501-02 [Sedden: 1934] than a theological development. However, the great Twelver jurist Muhammad Baqir Majlisi of the Safawid period states that the inclusion of the wilayah of 'Ali in the *adhan* is acceptable and not a sin [Majlisi: 1301-1305/1883-1887. XVIII. 162]. Majlisi notes on the prayer of *Ta'qib* [said after any prayer]:

"It is preferable to say immediately after any prayer there is no God but the One God, Muhammad is the messenger of God, 'Ali is the *wali* of God"

[Majlisi: 1301-1305/1883-1887. XVIII.430].

Majlisi also quotes the eighth Imam. al-Rida [148/765 - 203/818] attributing to him a version of a *salah* opening with the words:

I have turned my face towards Him who created the heavens and the earth, believing in the creed of Ibrahim and the religion of Muhammad and the *wilayah* of the Commander of the Faithful, 'Ali b. Abu Talib......and I bear witness how excellent a God Thou art and how excellent a messenger is Muhammad and how excellent a *wali* is 'Ali b. Abu Talib...

[Majilisi: 1301-1305/1883-1887. XVIII. 187-188]..

There are echoes in this prayer of Surah 6. 79 and 162:

"For me, I have set
My face, firmly and truly,
Towards Him who created
The heavens and the earth,
And never shall I give
Partners to God

[S6. 79].

Say: 'Truly, my prayer
And my service of sacrifice,
My life and my death,
Are [all] for God,
The Cherisher of the Worlds.

[S6. 162]

Whilst there are then no explicit statements supporting the three tenet *Shahadah* amongst the canonical texts of the Twelver-Shi'i, there are however, different conclusions to be drawn from their *Hadith* collections. Here there are foundations for such a credal statement to be found including the text compiled by al-Sadduq. In *al-Kafi fi al-Din*, the earliest and largest Shi'a collection, Kulini assembles numerous attestations to 'Ali's *wilayah* and to its standing as a Pillar of Faith [al-Kulini: 1375-1379/1955-1959]. He quotes the fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir [57/676 - c117/735] and the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq [80/699 or 83/702 or 86/705 - 148/765] as to the importance of 'Ali's *wilayah* and its position as a Pillar of the Faith:

> On the authority of the Fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir: "Islam was built on five pillars; *salat, zakat,* fasting, pilgrimage and *wilayah.* Nothing was proclaimed ire emphasised in the way which *wilayah* was proclaimed. But the people adopted the first four and left this [i.e. wilayah] [Kulini: 1375/1956. II. 18][1]. To the question: 'Which of them is supreme', the Imam al-Baqir gave the answer: '*Wilayah* is supreme because it is the key to them and the *wali* is he who points to them. Then, he places the 'pillars' in the following sequence after the *wilayah: salat, zakat,* pilgrimage and fasting"
>
> [al-Kulini: 1375/1956. II. 18].

The Sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq "was asked about those pillars of Islam, about which one cannot afford not to know something and which failure to know something about, would result in one's religion being corrupted and in God not accepting from one's deed. He said, '...the witness that there is no God but the One God, the belief that Muhammad is the messenger of God, the acknowledgement of the truth of what Muhammad brought from God, [payment of] the due on property which is the *zakat*, and the *wilayah* which God, to Him belong glory and power, commanded, namely the *wilayah* of the House of Muhammad.' [al-Kulini: 1375/1956. II. 19]

On this belief that the *wilayah* of 'Ali is an essential aspect of faith, there are additional evidences from ceremonial prayers and set devotions found in the four canonical books of the Shi'a. Al-Sadduq suggests that to affirm the two tenet *Shahadah* during the questioning in the grave [*musa'alah*] would not be sufficient to save even a believer from torment [al-Sadduq: 1942 Engl Trans. MS 26074. f12b]. Wensinck describes the parallel Sunni beliefs on the judgement in the grave:

> The punishment in the tomb is, on the other hand a favourite topic in Tradition. One of the oft-repeated traditions on the subject is as follows: "The Apostle of Allah passed by two graves. He said: Verily these are being punished, and they are not punished on account of grave sin. One of them was a backbiter and the other neglected purity regarding urine. The Apostle of God asked for a fresh palm-branch. This he rent into two pieces, and planted one of them on each grave, saying: Perhaps they will find relief, as long as these branches are not yet withered". [Wensinck: 1932. 118].

Consequently, al-Kulini writes in the 'Prayer for the Dead' with this pattern:

When the deceased is put in his grave, you recite the verses of *al-Kursi* [2. 256] , strike your hand on his right shoulder and say 'O.........! You had assented to the One God as your God and Islam as your religion and Muhammad, may God bless him and his progeny, as prophet and 'Ali, peace be upon him, as Imam

[Al-Kulini: 1302/1884. 54].

Al-Sadduq gives a variation of this by adding the word *wali* before *Imam* [al-Sadduq: 1334/1915. 59]. Al-Kulini reports on the authority of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq that at the moment of a believer's death, the Prophet comes with 'Ali, the angel Gabriel and the Angel of Death:

"'Ali comes near him and says, 'O Messenger of God! This man loved the Family of the House, so love him. The Messenger of God says, O Gabriel! This man loved God, His Messenger and the Family of His Messenger, so love him. Gabriel says to the Angel of Death, This man loved God, His Messenger and the Family of His Messenger, so love him and have mercy on him. The Angel of Death comes near to him [the deceased] and says, 'O servant of God! Have you taken hold of the greatest protection in the life of this world? He [the Imam] said, God, to Him belong glory and power, will help him and will say, 'Yes. [The Angel of Death proceeds] 'What is that?' He says, 'The *wilayah* of 'Ali b. Abu Talib'. Then, he will say, 'You have spoken truth fully. As to what you have feared, God has given you safety; as to what you have hoped for, you have attained it'".

[al-Kulini: 1302/1884. 36-37].

Al-Sadduq relates another tradition, which demonstrates further this pious reference to the status of 'Ali as *wali* and his *wilayah* as an essential statement in the context of a believer's dying and funeral rites. He describes how the Prophet buried the mother of 'Ali, Fatima bint Asad, in his own shirt:

'Wherefore did I [Muhammad] shroud her in my own shirt and reclined in her grave, and stooped over her and instructed her regarding the matters about which she would be questioned. She was asked about her Lord, and she said: "My Lord is the One God." And she was asked about her prophet and she replied "Muhammad". And she was asked about her Imam and *wali* and she faltered and paused. And I said to her:

> "Thy son, thy son". So she said: "My Imam is my son. Thereupon they [the two angels Munkar and Nakir] departed from her and said: "We have no power over you"
>
> [Sadduq: 1942. 13a].

There are other examples of other prayers whose earliest versions contained in the Twelver Shi'i texts express belief in the *wilayah* of Imam 'Ali:

The 'Prayer of Thanksgiving' is one such devotional text:

> your creation is my witness that You, O God! You are my witness and Your angels and Your prophets and Your messengers are my witnesses and all! are my Lord and that Islam is my religion and that Muhammad is my prophet and that "Ali ibn Abu Talib - and [here] the prayer shall name the twelve Imams - are my Imams. I take them as my *walis* and I repudiate their enemies'.
>
> [al-Sadduq: 1334/1915. 69].

The 'Prayer of Ta'qib' which is cited by Kulini on the authority of Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq contains these expressions:

> 'O God! Obedience and servitude to You and the *wilayah* to your Imams [and here you name them], may peace be upon them, are incumbent upon me. O God! Obedience to You and *wilayah* to them are incumbent upon me'.
>
> [Kulini: 1302/1884. 96].

These extracts and traditions from the daily and ceremonial prayers quoted on the authority of the Imams in the four Shi'i canonical texts are early evidence that the Twelver jurist scholars, some time before Majlisi considered that belief and declaration of the *wilayah* of Imam 'Ali as equally essential to true faith and salvation as belief in the *tauhid* oneness of God and the Prophethood of Muhammad. They were however, sufficiently cautious enough not to link belief in the *wilayah* of 'Ali with the formal phrases of the *shahadah.* There were certainly important factors such as safeguarding against the "'Alid extremes of the Ghulat movements as well as the desire to stand on uncontroversial ground when in debate with Sunni contemporaries. Consequently, they chose the safer path of establishing their affirmation of the *wilayah* of 'Ali as a pillar of faith alongside the accepted pillars of *Salat, Zakat, Saum,* and *Hajj* whilst placing it first in priority. It has to be considered that in doing this, the jurists were not wholly logical for the other pillars are deeds *'a'mal* whereas belief and stating the *wilayah* of 'Ali is a matter of faith. this would place it in the same category as the two tenets of faith given in the *Shahadah.* When the phrase 'I bear witness that 'Ali is the *wali* of God' was formulated, with consistency it should have been spoken as part of the one formula expressing the confession of faith.

By the lifetime of Majlisi however, the influence of the Ghulat streams had diminished and polemics had equally lost their acerbic nature. The belief in the *wilayah* had penetrated deeply into the consciousness of the Shi'a communities and the time had come when the Shi'i could begin to express more openly their differences with the majority Sunni streams. Thus, the two tenet confession formulated by Sunni jurist scholars and formally adopted by the Shi'i, could be superseded by the truer expression of Shi'i doctrinal sentiments.

The dilemma of the Twelver Shi'i jurists is revealed by the development of the three tenet *Shahadah.* They had accepted the Qur'anic doctrine that Muhammad was the seal of the prophets but equally held that there was a continuance in his prophetic charismatic ministry after his death through his descendants. The perception amongst the Twelver Shi'i jurists of the Imamate as a continuity of the Prophet's mission allowed the creation of a theological and juridical foundation for an ongoing prophetic ministry in 'Ali and the subsequent eleven Imams.

2.4.2 Wilayah: its significance.

As a verbal Arabic noun, *wilayah* bears the basic meanings of 'friendship', 'assistance' 'authority' and 'power'. It is used however, in a complex variety of meanings concerning function, position of authority, or the domain of authority of a *wali* i.e. a 'next of kin', 'ally', 'friend', 'client', 'patron', 'saint'; a *mawla*: is a 'cousin', 'close relation', 'ally', 'client', 'master'; whilst wali signifies: 'administrator', 'governor', or 'ruler'.

Wilayah is generally taken to convey the sense of 'power', 'authority' or 'the delegation of power or authority' within a state. This latter meaning will bear considerable significance for Shi'i understanding of the 'authority' delegated by the Prophet to his cousin at the Ghadir Khumm gathering during the final pilgrimage by the Prophet to Mecca [11/632].

The verbal noun *al-walayah* occurs only twice in the Qur'an [S 8.72 and 8.44], whilst other references of the root *wly* are to be found in some two hundred instances.

'Those who believed,
and adopted exile,
And fought for the Faith,
with their property

And their persons,
In the cause of God,
As well as those
Who gave [them] asylum
And aid - these are [all]
Friends [*awliya*] and protectors,
One of another.'

[S 8.72].

'And remember when ye met,
He showed them to you
As few in your eyes,
And He made you appear
As contemptible in their eyes:
That God might accomplish
A matter already enacted.
For to god do all questions
Go back [for decision].'

[S 8.44].

Most often, the verbal forms *walla* and *tawalla* are used with the sense of 'turning' either one's back or face literally or metaphorically towards someone, or a gathering or a place, e.g. a sacred place, an opposing army or towards God himself. Qur'anically, God 'turns' towards or 'takes care of' the devout:

'For my Protector is God.....
....
And He will choose
And befriend the righteous'.

[S 7. 196].

'........But God
is the Protector
of the Righteous'

[S 45. 19].

The forms of *wali* and *mawla* are used without distinction to describe a covenant relationship between two partners in a close alliance or relationship. This can be both in a human social tie such as in a familial relationship or in a form of alliance. It also describes the relationship between Humankind and God. From a *wali* or a *mawla* can be expected both assistance and inheritance, which may be in a spiritual form as in the case of the Qur'an's version of the birth of John the Baptist. This follows a messianic theme implicit in the Judaeo-Christian background of that theme: Zacharias in having no natural son and perhaps fearing the claims of his *mawali* [secondary heirs and possibly priest colleagues] asks God for 'a noble offspring' [Surah 3.38].

'Where did Zakariya
Pray to his Lord, saying:
"O my Lord! Grant unto me
From Thee a progeny
That is pure: for Thou
Art He that heareth prayer!"'

[S3. 38].

Zacharias continues:

'Now I fear [*waht*]
My relatives [and colleagues]
[Will do] after me:
But my wife is barren:
So give me an heir [*wali*]
As from Thyself, -

[One that] will [truly]
Represent me, and represent [i.e. inherit]
The posterity of Jacob;
And make him, O my Lord!
One with whom Thou art
Well pleased

[S 19. 5-6].

There is a similar aspiration found in Surah 4. 75 where without the sense of family relationship and actual or spiritual inheritance, the oppressed i.e. Makkan Muslims, alone after the Prophet's migration to Medina, request God to bring them out from persecution:

'Our Lord!
Rescue us from this town,
Whose people are oppressors;
And raise for us from Thee
One who will protect [*walí*];
And raise for us from Thee
One who will help [*nasir*]

[S 4. 75].

According to Surah 41. 28-31, the enemies of God will forever be in the fire of hell whilst the angels will come upon the righteous as their 'friends' [*awliya*] in the present life and the next so that they will not be afraid. In fact according to Surah 10.62 the 'friends of God' [*awliya Allah* i.e. the pious] shall have 'no fear' at all, a phrase often quoted in Sufi texts.

The concept of God as the most powerful friend and helper [*wali nasir*] is a major theme of Qur'anic proclamation and various verse make it clear that those who do 'turn away' [Surah 9. 74] or are 'led astray' [Surah 18. 17] actually have no *wali* [Surah 42. 8] or *mawla* [47. 11] i.e. no-one to turn to for assistance or guidance. A similar message is given in the Qur'anic parable of the wealthy but unrighteous owner of two gardens and his poor yet devout companion [Surah 18. 32ff], which ends with one of the two Qur'anic verses in which *al-wilayah* occurs. The rich person becomes the loser despite the prosperity of his land and the influence of his clan because in the end:

'Ultimately, the *wilayah* belongs to God, the
Truth'

[S 18. 44].

This *ayah* is drawn from the Makkan period with an understanding of the Prophet as a 'warner'. The other verse [Surah 8. 72] where *al-walayah* appears reflects the situation after the *Hijrah* in 622 when the new community was being formed. This verse defines the relationships between the three groups, which formed the original *Ummah* at Medina. The new community is described in terms of *walayah:* i.e. firstly, those who emigrated [*muhajirun*] and fought 'on the path of God', secondly, those who welcomed and were helpers [*ansar*] for them in Medina, and thirdly, those who did not emigrate. The first two groups were the core of the new community and are according to Surah 8. 72 the friends and allies of each other [*awliya*] whilst:

'as to those who believed
But came not into exile,
Ye owe them no duty
of protection to them [*wilayah*]
until they come into exile;'

[S 8. 72].

The traditional exegesis of this verse speaks of a ritual or ceremonial 'brothering' *mu'akhah* which is said to have occurred between the migrants and their Madinan hosts and helpers. This moment was meant to end the former ties of blood relationship to clan and family in Mecca and to inaugurate a new form of community for the Muslim people. This radical innovation was later to be abrogated by Surahs 8. 75 and 33. 6, which state that:

'And those who
accept Faith subsequently,
and adopt exile,

and fight for the faith
in your company, -
they are of you.
But kindred by blood
have prior rights [*awla*]
against each other
in the Book of God'.

[S 8. 75].

and

'Blood - relations have
closer [*awla*] personal ties,
in the Decree of God.
Than the [Brotherhood of]
believers and Muhajirs:

[S 33. 6].

Watt: 1960. 84 offers the conclusion that 'Muhammad was prepared to use the kinship principle to increase the cohesion of his religious community in Medina'. However a parallel passage in Surah 4. 89 suggests that the ties of *walayah* may have been those of friendship or alliance rather than links by blood and familial relationship:

They that wish that ye
should reject the faith,
as they do, and thus be
on the same footing [as they]:
but take not friends
from their ranks
until they flee
in the way of God
[from what is forbidden].
But if they turn renegades,
seize them and slay them
wherever ye find them;
and [in any case] take
no friends or helpers
from their ranks;-

[S 4. 89].

Certainly, the new charismatic community of believers was a united body of the Prophet's followers and was directed against his enemies. Both migrants were the 'true believers' [Surah 8. 74] and those who wee engaged in fighting [*mujahidun*] were placed in a higher ranking order then those 'sitting' at home [Surah 4. 95-96]. By contrast to the new *Ummah* united in its *wilayah*, its opponents were also united in a bond of *'awliya* with one another whether they were 'unbelievers' protecting one another [Surah 8. 73], 'hypocrites' - perverse and rebellious [Surah 9. 67-72], the 'unjust' [Surahs 45. 19 and 6. 129] or as 'Jews and Christians'. The new *Ummah* was modeled after the example of the People of Abraham but Abraham is seen as neither Jewish nor Christian [Surah 3. 64-68], for example in .67.

Abraham was not a Jew
nor yet a Christian;
But he was true in faith,
and bowed his will to God's,
[which is Islam],
and he joined not gods with God.

[S 3. 67].

In the Madinan *surahs* the Jews are challenged to substantiate their claim to be the exclusive People of God:

'If ye think that ye
are friends [*awliya Allah min dun al-nas*] to God
to the exclusion of
[other] men, then express
your desire for death,
if ye are truthful!'

[S 62. 6-8 and 2. 94-95].

From Qur'anic evidence therefore *wilayah* appears to be an exclusive socio-religious concept. A person may adopt either the right or wrong side and these two parties are inevitably engaged in constant hostilities.

'Those who believe
fight in the cause of God,
and those who reject the faith
fight in the cause of Evil:
so fight ye against the
friends [*awliya*] of Satan: feeble indeed
is the cunning of Satan.

[S4. 76].

The word used for 'Satan' in this *ayah* is *Al-Taghut* which is probably derived from the Ethiopic *ta'ot* i.e. 'idols' which is frequently used for Satanic, unlawful and tyrannical powers in Shi'i interpretations.

A cosmology is therefore presented with the world divided between two antagonistic groups: there is the Party of God *hizb Allah* [S5. 59] and the Party of Satan [S58. 19] yet this is no dualistic system. For the Party of God viz.:

'As to those who turn
[for Friendship] [*ya-tawallah*] to God,
His Apostle, and the Fellowship
of]Believers, - it is
the Fellowship of God
that must certainly triumph'

[S 5. 59]

whilst those who choose the side of Satan:

'Whoever,
forsaking God, takes Satan
for a friend [*wali*], hath
of a surety suffered
a loss that is manifest.'

[S 4. 119].

As if the divine *wilayah* were spread through the charismatic community, S 5. 58 affirms that:

'Your [real] friends [*wali*] are
[no less than] God,
His Apostle, and the [Fellowship
of Believers] - those who
establish regular prayers
and regular charity,
and they bow
down humbly in worship.'

[S 5. 58].

Consequently, the Medina community's *wilayah* seems to be the charisma of the Party of God, within which the person of the Prophet himself plays a key and pivotal role. Although the Prophet is constantly seen as a human and never a divine figure, this place for the Prophet is emphasised in the latter parts of the Qur'an in general. The climax comes in the solemn pledge of allegiance [*mubaya'ah*] made to Muhammad in lieu of God in 6/628 at al-Hudaybiyah [Surah 48. 9-10]. The subsequent pacts of loyalty or allegiance [*bay'ah*] made with the Prophet's successors, whether caliphs, Imams by the subjects or on their behalf by the ulama and political leaders followed this model. In time, disciples [*murids*] would make a similar pact of loyalty with their Sufi *Shaykh* or Spiritual Master. These would all claim to be a form of *wilayah* of some character, which would reiterate this charismatic basis of Islam in symbolic forms.

2.4.3 *Wilayah:* Its Legal Usage.

In Islamic Law there is preserved the right of the *wali* to avenge a murdered relative personally [Surah 17. 33]. Such a privilege [*wilayat al-dam*] is most probably traceable to the pre-Islamic period when forms of requital were exercised.

Inheritance Laws within the Sunni tradition, which were elaborated principally by the jurist Muhammad ibn Idris al-Shafi'i [150/767-205/820] in the second century AH follow the Arab pattern in general and the *sunnah* of the Prophet in strictly particularity [Schacht: 1979. 11]. The main heir is the *wali* as the key male agnate in either descending or ascending order [*asabah*]. However, he will share with secondary heirs in accord with Surah 4. 7ff

'From what is left by parents
and those nearest related
there is a share for men
and a share for women,
whether the property be small
or large - a determinate share.'

[S 4. 7ff].

Under Shafi'i terms in certain circumstances the inheritance of a freed salve goes to his former owner, who has become his patron [*mawla*] and is considered to be amongst the agnates of the deceased. In the early Umayyad period a parallel pattern of legal kinship was assumed between non-Arab converts to Islam and their Arab patrons who effectively 'adopted' them as clients [*mawali*].

Al-Jurjani [717/1339-791/1413] differentiates *walayah* and *wilayah* defining the former as 'legal kinship' [*qarabah hukmiyah*] resulting from either freedom granted to a slave or 'adoption' and the latter as 'legal power' to carry out a decision affecting another person. This action may be taken with or without the permission of the one involved. In this sense the concept of *wilayah* as a legal power is not Qur'anic in nature but it developed in the Islamic second century in these two contrasting social spheres viz. family law and political ideas.

2.4.4 Family Law.

Surah 4. 1ff states the Qur'anic Laws of inheritance alongside general rules and customs concerning marriage and dowry gifts as well as protection of orphans and their property, care for the mentally ill and their representation by a *wali* [Surah 2. 282]. The functions of a *wali* with regard to brides, orphans and young children were eventually defined in terms of trusteeship or guardianship. The most significant of these offices would become the role of *wilayat al-nikah* [guardianship of marriage] when the closest relative of the bride would give her in contractual agreement to the bridegroom. Schacht [1950: 182ff] comments that the *wilayat al-nikah* was originally not a legal institution but followed the comparatively relaxed model of pre-Islamic marriage practice only becoming stronger in identity as Islam evolved in the second century of Islam.

2.4.5 Political Ideas.

In the sense of political authority and power *wilayah* refers firstly to the authority of the Prophet and then to his successors, that is the caliph who is worthy of obedience [*mut'a*] as the leader and guide of the community and as *amir al-mu'minin* 'commander of the faithful'. As has been noted there is a basic disagreement on the nature and range of this authority and the persons given it. Both Sunni and Shi'i traditions however, refer to the same text to justify their claims viz. Surah 4. 59:

'O ye who believe!
Obey God, and obey the Apostle,
and those charged
with authority [*ulu al-amr*] among you.

[S 4. 59].

As a result this verse is referred to as *wilayat al-amr* and the use of *wilayah* here needs to be seen in relation to the development of the charismatic alliance of those who :

'.....turn
for friendship to God,
his Apostle, and the [fellowship
of] Believers, - it is
the Fellowship of God
that must certainly triumph.'

[S 5. 56].

The question of whom was to assume the leadership of the community after the Prophet's death became the primary issue between the various parties within Islam post 11/632. The perception of the earliest *Shi'at 'Ali* and assumed by later Shi'a groups was that 'Ali merited the succession and the assumption of the Prophet's *wilayah* both by the kinship principle and his status as 'emigrant brother'. Such qualifications have made his position and claim in their eyes pre-eminent and unique.

Evidently however, the kinship principle was insufficient to guarantee 'Ali the immediate succession to the *wilayt al-amr.* Designation completed the process of selection and appointment, which was made possible by the ambiguity of the term *mawla.* In an attested Hadith tradition, the Prophet had stated at a solemn meeting after his final pilgrimage to Mecca and just before his death:

'Am I not closer [*awla*] to the believers than they are to themselves?........He whose *mawla* I am, 'Ali is his *mawla*! God, befriend the one who befriends him [*wali man walahu*], and treat as an enemy the one who treats him as an enemy!'

[al-Tirmidhi: 1350/1931. II, 298].

Surah 33. 6 needs to be compared with this Hadith:

'The Prophet is closer
to the Believers than
their own selves,
and his wives are
their mothers. Blood-relations
among each other have
closer personal tries,
in the decree of God,
than the [Brotherhood of]
Believers and Muhajirs:'

The pro-'Alid seventh and eighth century poet from Kufa, al-Kumayt ibn Zayd al-Asadi [58/680–121/743] provides in his 'Hashimiyat' the earliest support for interpreting this Hadith as an assertion of 'Ali's rightful place to be obeyed by the community ie his *wilayah.*

A further source of evidence concerning the concept of *wilayah* within Shi'i understanding emerges in the heresiological writings that survive from the Kharijite movement. It was a key theme for the Kharijites that anyone 'even an Abyssinian slave' could serve as Imam provided that person was a true believer. The earliest Kharijite texts date from 70/692 - 150/772 and differentiate between the 'Imams of truth' and the 'Imams of error'. The former were to be obeyed as *awliya* to believers whilst the second group were to be resisted as unbelievers. In addition, within the Kharijite stream the principle of *wilayah* evolved in the pattern of association with true believers and distancing oneself from opposite powers [*bara'ah, tabarru'*]. The Shi'a were to adopt a similar double principle [Persian: *tawalla* and *tabarra'*] with the proviso that true believers to be emulated and followed were the Holy Family of the Prophet, 'Ali, his sons and their subsequent successors in the line of the Imams.

Paradoxically, the death of 'Ali did not bring success to the Kharijite ideology of a pure community. With the assumption of power by the Umayyads in the subsequent power vacuum the principle of dynastic political succession was assured for Islam's leadership. The heir apparent came to be designated by the ruling caliph [*wali al-'ahd*]. Thus whilst the Umayyad caliph was scarcely a religious office the holder was still termed both 'successor of the Messenger of God' and 'representative of God' on earth [*khalifat Allah*] a term drawing inspiration from Surah 38. 26 which describes David as God's 'vicegerent on earth'. This honorific continued to be applied to the caliph in the Abbasid period.

Pro-'Alid hopes together with dissatisfaction at Umayyad worldliness with other factors initiated the Abbasid Revolution of 132/749 in the Eastern Caliphate. The descendants of the Prophet's uncle Al-Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Mutalib [d. 32/652] were offered as 'true believers' and members of the 'providential family'. Once in power the Abbasid line did demonstrate a considerable religious zeal. The *ulama* elaborated a Sunni model of *wilayat al-amr* which created a close association with the reigning caliph. The dynasty reached its zenith of power and cultural influence under Harun al-Rashid [179/786 - 194/803] who is addressed by the jurist Abu Yusuf [d 176/798] as a disciple of Abu Hanifah as the '*khalifah* of God on earth' to whom God has 'delegated the command' [*tawliyat al-amr*] and 'given light' to guide his subjects by law and its implementation. Abu Yusuf however, makes a Sufi note in this address as he urges the Caliph to attend to his high office and its responsibilities, praying that God will not 'abandon him to himself' ie human weakness; instead that God will care for him [*yatawalla*] as he would care for his friends [*awliya*] as he is the final *wali* in these matters.

In the later Abbasid era [notably during the caliphate of al-Mutasim 218/833 - 227/842] genuine political power slipped from the hands of the dynasty into their military supporters drawn from Turkic peoples. However, the actual caliph was still designated the guardian of the law [*wali al-shar'*]. According to al-Mawardi [363/975-458/1080] the religious law requires that all issues of general authority [*wilayah 'ammah*] are given to the elected or designated Imam descending from the Quraish ie the Abbasid caliph. The caliph in turn delegated authority [*tawliyah*] to viziers, commanders, governors and judges giving the theory that all power [*tawliyat*] comes from him and are validated by him It was al-Ghazali who recognised that the transfer of power from the caliph in office to military and administrative 'subordinates' had to be justified. He would argue that 'religion [*din*] and kingship [*mulk*] are twin brothers in need of each other'. Consequently, the role of 'shadow of God on earth' could now be played by non-Arabs with a tenuous claim to bloodline relationship to the Prophet's family if any at all.

2.4.6 Shi'i Concepts of *Wilayah*.

In distinction to the Sunni development of *Wilayah* as a state-government issue the Shi'i understanding of *wilayah* perceived it as devotion primarily to the family of the Prophet, to 'Ali and thence to the succeeding Imams.

Respondent 1.2 adhered to this view:

7. Can you describe your understanding of the concepts of *Wali* and *Wilayah*?

Well, Wilayah is about rule – spiritual in most cases as much as political…….so we are speaking of a person who has the capacity to exercise a spiritual power – as the Imams do in their lives, and we believe visibly the Returning Imam will do so………

Wali is more than a friend although he is that of God...the third tenet of the shahadah defines a person as a Shi'a – Wilayah is both leadership and friendship which gives authority to the leader.

Both despite and because of several attempts by pro-'Alid movements to take power - the martyrdom in Shi'i eyes of Imam Husayn [5/624 - 61/680] at Karbala being an important such move - Imams of the Prophet's lineage became the focal points of such veneration which moves beyond the charismatic assertion of Surah 5. 55-56. Nonetheless the Shi'i doctrines of the *wilayat* of 'Ali take their inspiration from this text which resulted in the apotheosis of the Imam. Shi'ism became increasingly receptive to messianic hopes and gnostic ideas within Islam.

The actual bestowal of *wilayah* from the Prophet Muhammad to 'Ali was perceived as a part of a more general and universal process of salvation, which would be fulfilled in history by the succeeding Imams. The Imams were the receptors of esoteric [*batin*] knowledge and the substance of the previous prophets, Arab and non-Arab. This is a pattern of transmigration [*tanasukh*] that leads to the final revelation of truth and justice with the advent of 'the one who stands up' [*al-qa'im*]. Even with the repudiation of the more extremist sects [*ghulat*] by the Imams themselves over the centuries, and even with the Imams not being placed above the Prophet's law according to Shi'i doctrine, its major affirmation stresses that only the transfer of *wilayah* from Muhammad to 'Ali and the succeeding Imams makes Islam the 'perfect religion'.

This day have I
perfected your religion
For you, completed
my favour upon you,
and chosen for you,
Islam as your religion.

[Surah 5. 4].

In fact the emphasis upon *wilayah* as loyalty to the governance of the Imams and acceptance of their mission as the true 'holders of the divine command' [*uli al-amr*] and the sole possessors of the valid interpretation of the Qur'an and 'knowledge of the hidden' [*ilm al-ghayb*], continues to be the key to salvation and one without which no devout action of obedience to God [*ta'ah*] is true. It is for these reasons that *wilayah* and not the declaration of belief in the One God [*tauhid*] as in Sunni traditions, therefore appears as the principal 'pillar' of faith in the classical collections of the Shi'i traditions whether the Twelvers [e.g. al-Kulayni d 328/939] or the Fatimid Ismailiyah [e.g. Qadi al-Nu'man], who then follow a common line of Imams up to Ja'far al-Sadiq [d. 148/765].

Respondent 1.4 commented:

12. Can you describe your understanding of the concepts of Wali and Wilayah?

Wilayah is about rulership and authority – which is exercised by the Wali whom we say is 'Ali; to some extent the imams share in the wilayah of the Prophet. He is the true Wali of God Walayah is a more Shi'a concept which has to do with the power and authority that the Imams have to introduce the faithful to true spiritual knowledge.....the Shi'a say that you cannot have salvation without knowing the Imam....the Hidden Imam that is.........

Following these two streams in the Twelver and Isma'iliyah, the actual significances and functions of *wilayah* are quite distinct. As opposed to the politically quietist attitudes of the Twelvers, the Ishmailiyah or Sevener tradition were active politically and succeeded in establishing by the close of the third Muslim century a Shi'i counter-caliph in North Africa and subsequently established the Fatimid Caliph in Egypt [297/909 – 567/1171], which formed a serious challenge to the dominant Abbasid power. For an understanding of *wilayah* during these historical developments it is noteworthy that the Fatimid campaign in North Africa is understood in Ismai'li sources [i.e. Qadi al-Nuhman] as parallel to the Prophet Muhammad's migration from Mecca to Medina and thence the establishment of the Muslim state there. In the same manner as the Qur'anic emigrant fighters are given status above those who remained at home so the frontline combatants of the Fatimid leader Abu Abd Allah al-Shi'i [d. 289/911] are denoted as *awliya* distinct from the ordinary believers [*mu'minum*]. The actual Fatimid Caliph who was referred to as *wali Allah* and 'Imam of the Time' was clearly seen as in the role of the Prophet himself. Thus, he was not only the political head of the opposing Caliph to that at Baghdad but also the spiritual pivot of an esoteric hierarchy, the *da'wah* [call/mission] initiation into which was believed to provide gradual access to gnostic awareness [*ilm*] - a course which in his time al-Ghazzali [450/1058- 505/1111] sensed would undermine Islam from within.

From the perspective of an Ismai'li missionary [*da'i*] such as Qadi al-Numan, *wilayah* was the basis of a sacred history of prophecy and found its fulfilment in the Imamate. It represented secret knowledge [*haqiqat al-ilm*] given primordially to Adam and thence by inheritance to the prophets and Imams. In the terms of al-Mu'ayyad fi al-Din [d 455/1077] prophets and Imams in their respective times were examples of an 'absolute human being', the gnostic 'anthropos' [*al-insan al-mutlaq*]. Just as the Prophet Muhammad was the 'seal of the prophets' [Surah 33. 40] so the last Imam of resurrection [*qiyamah*] is the Seal of the Imams [*khatam al a'immah*].

By contrast, in the Twelver tradition the concept of the Imam is characterised by the theme of 'occultation' [*ghayab*] or the absence of the Twelfth Imam. The twelfth in line, Abu'l-Qasim Muhammad ibn Hasan [c.255/868- 260/873-4] is believed to have disappeared in 260 / 873-4. Upon his return [*ra'jah*] at the end of time, the hope is that justice will replace injustice on earth. In his absence, the Shi'i *ulama* gradually assumed authority in theological and juristic matters just as their Sunni counterparts had already done. However, they stressed that the presence of the hidden, invisible and infallible [*mas'um*] Imam, a 'grace necessary upon God' [*luft wajib*] would authenticate their consensus opinion. Parallel to the rationalist Shi'ism of the *ulama* came a reappearance of Gnostic Shi'ism in Sufi form during the ninth to fourteenth centuries. Sayyid Haydar Amuli [d. 743/1365] interpreted ibn-Arabi's doctrine of the 'two seals of *wilayah'* in the terms of Twelver Shi'i Imamology and the twelfth Imam as 'the seal of particular Muhammadan *wilayah'*. In this understanding *wilayah* becomes both the inner dimension of prophethood [*batin al-nubuwah*] and the transcendental calling of humankind, or the trust offered to humanity.

We did indeed offer
the Trust to the heavens
and the earth
and the mountains;
but they refused
to undertake it,
being afraid thereof:
but man undertook it: -
he was indeed unjust
and foolish.

[S 33. 72].

Sufi orders in this period such as the Safawiyah and the Kubrawiyah gradually became increasingly Shi'i orientated, most probably due to the effects of the Mongol invasions. The Safawiyah with support from Turkman, and claiming descent from the Imams even became extremist Shi's. Once the leadership took control of Iran under Shah Isma'il c 907/1501, they established Twelver Shi'ism, albeit in a form inconsistent with original, orthodox Shi'ism, as the state religion. Their prayer carpet [*sajjadah*], the sign of the dignity of a Sufi *shaykh* or *wilayah*, became the symbol of the quasi-divine throne of Persia [*q'Alicah-i saltanat*]. Eventually, and somewhat by paradox, their success allowed the evolution of the Shi'i *ulama* or clerical group and in time their involvement in the political life of the nation. For the first time in Twelver Shi'i history, the *Usuli* or rationalist tradition formally recognised a division of work between the *ulama* and the political rulers. They then claimed a general vicegerency [*wilayah 'ammah*] of the Hidden Imam for themselves, against the more traditional understandings of the Akhbari school and the Sufis.

Iran in the nineteenth century was a complex situation in political, religious and social terms. Integral to this period were tensions between the majority of the clergy and the Shaykhi school, who had developed a mystical understandings of the 'perfect Shi'a' founded upon Akhbari traditions and especially on the philosophy of Mulla Sadra [Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Dasr ad-Din ash-Shirazi: 979/1571- 1050/1640]. In the Shayki approach, the Imam presides over the realisation of humanity's vocation in the realm between matter and spirit [*'alam al-mithal*] and not over the implementation of a political project. It might be noted here that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the leader of the Iranian Revolution [1903 - 1989] made a fundamental, although theoretical distinction between two forms of *wilayah* viz.: that of the learned jurist [*wilayah al-faqih*] - relative *wilayah* [*wilayah i'tibariyah*] and that of the traditional Imams of the prophetic house - real or creative *wilayah* [*wilayah takwiniyah*].

2.4.7 The Sufi Concept.

Within Sufi schools the concept of *wilayah* is also significant. In one text viz. Abu-l-Hasan 'Ali al-Hujwiri's [d.469/1077] *Kashf al-Mahjub li-Arbab al-Qulub* [Unveiling of the Hidden for the Lords of the Heart] it is said to be the very principle of Sufism. Here again however, there are two principles involved with early Sufism idealising poverty [*faqr, darvishi*] and trust in God [*tawakkul*]. This may be compared with the early Makkan period of the Islamic community's history with its themes of trust and communal insecurity in the face of opposition, and that of the Madinan period of growing worldly success and power. Ibrahim ibn Adham [d. 166/783], born a Prince of Balkh, was quoted by the reputed Sufi teacher in Baghdad, Abu 'Abd Allah Harith ibn al-Muasibi [d. 243 /857] as saying:

> 'If you wish to be God's friend [*wali*] and care that he loves you, then leave this world and the next and do not heed either; free yourself from both and turn your face to God, so that he turns his face to you.'
>
> [al-Muasibi: :1889. 1. 213].

A number of *hadith qudsi* [non-Quranic 'words of God'] suggest that there are such friends of God. As in the case of clear Qur'anic ideas of *awliya* there is an ambiguity as to whether these 'friends' are angelic or human figures.

'Approaching God and approached by Him'

They have attained such a stage that God says:

> 'I am his ear by which he hears, his eye by which he sees, his tongue by which he speaks, his heart by which he understands.'

No tradition reveals their names whereas according to others such persons are 'hidden under God's tents, unknown to anyone but Him.' The first comprehensive collection of traditions relating to these 'friends' is found in Abu Nu'aym al-Isbahani's *Hilyat al-awliya* where many of the traditions are attributed to pre-Islamic prophets such as John the Baptist *Yahya ibn Zakariya* and Jesus *Isa.* The evidence suggests a gnostic origin for such sayings with others are of mythological character. According to the writings known in Sufi literature as the *hadith* of 'Abd Allah ibn Mas'ud, there are some 355 or 356 such figures, upon whom the life and death of nations rest: 300 'whose heart is after the heart' of Adam; 40 who are in the same relationship to Moses [or Noah]; 7 to Abraham; 5 [or 4] to the angel Gabriel; 3 to Michael; and one to Seraphiel [Israfil, the angel of resurrection]. If one of them dies, then God replaces him with one of the next lower class of beings. The substitutes of the lowest class of all [the 300] are drawn from the common people [*al- 'ammah*]. The single one is commonly called the 'pole' [*qutb*] or the 'rescue' [*ghawth*] whilst such terms as *abdal* [for the 40 Or the 7] and *siddiqun* [Surah 4. 69] refer to a class, or to saints in general like *awliya.*

The handbook of Abu al-Qasim al-Qushayri [d. 450/1072] provides a typical Sufi understanding of *wilayah* Al-Qushatri describes the *wali* in two forms: firstly in a passive sense, as one of the devout believers for whom God takes responsibility *wa Houwa yatawalla al-salihin* [Surah 7. 196]; with a second, more intense meaning by which one tales responsibilty for uninterrupted commitment and devotion to God *'ala al—tawali.* Both definitions in al-Qushayri's perspective is acceptable, as they describe both sides of the relationship between God and the believer: protection from God and commitment from the believer. From this basic relationship, al-Qushrayri moves on to describe other conclusions. The Prophet is *ma'sum* immaculate or impeccable whilst the *wali* is *mahfuz* protected from sin [al-Qushayri: 1772-1976. II. 520.525].

In Sufism therefore, *wilayah* is a charismatic quality that enables a *wali* to be the subject of miracles. In classical Sufism, e.g. the Khorasani stream, there was division over whether *awliya* should be self-conscious over their sanctity or their charismatic gifts should be publicly known. In the opinion of Bayazid al-Bastami [d. 253/875] the *awliya* were to be hidden like the 'brides of God' being highly critical of public displays. In contrast, Tirmidhi al-Hakim, who was the reputed founder of the Sufi doctrine of *wilayah* dismissed such restraint as a subtle form of self-consciousness. In the definition of his disciple and contemporary, Abu 'Ali al-Juzjani [d. circa 342/964], a *wali* is 'in oblivion [*fana*] of himself but exists in [*baqa*] contemplation'. Other well-known definitions distinguish 'active' from 'passive' aspects [al-Qushayri] or a *wilayah* of 'lordship' [Surah 18. 44] from a *wilayah* of 'love' as described by al-Hujwiri [d. 469/1077].

In Sufi understandings of *wilayah* there is 'insight into the hidden' [*al-ilm bi-al-ghayb:* Tirmidhi], the 'control of souls' [*tasarruf*], psychognostic and pedagogic abilities, and the spiritual power to drive Satan away. In the Medieval period, Sufi saints were noted for their intercessory capacity [*shafa'ah*] to assist both Muslim armies and individual sinners. In the postclassical Sufi texts, *wilayah* usually refers either to the highest mystical stage that may be reached or to the authority exercised by Sufi master, or to both at the same time. Najm al-Din Kubra [d. 599/1221] perceives the highest stage as bearing the experience of divine creative power [*takwin*]. By contrast, his followers in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, who had become receptive to Shi'a ideas albeit had not identified themselves as Shi'i [especially Ala' al-Dawlah al-Simnani [d 746/1336] stress the double experience of the Prophet Muhammad - i.e. his *wilayah* or mystical experience and his *nubuwah* or prophetic authority - as an essential model for their own double experience of mystical attainment and spiritual authority.

A major theoretical issue discussed in Sufi circles from the outset focussed upon the nature of the relationship between the *awliya* and the Prophet Muhammad i.e. between the Sufi and the person of the Prophet. The Sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq is cited by Abu Nu'aym as saying:

> 'Whoever lives in the "outward" [*zahir*] of the Messenger [Muhammad] is a Sunni, and whoever lives in the "inward" [*batin*] of the Messenger is a Sufi'.
>
> [Nu'aym: 1889. 506]

In his commentary on the Qur'an, the Sufi teacher Sahl al-Tustari [d.306/896] the heart or spiritual reality of the Prophet is to be seen as the divine element enshrined in him and the source for the illumination of human hearts; his pre-Adamic Light Nature [*nur Muhammadi*] is the origin of the prophetic ancestors of humankind, as well as of those 'desired by God' i.e. the *awliya.*

The *wilayah* from God however, is conferred directly on the chosen, who are in addition those who have the right understanding of God and the Qur'an [al-Tustari: 1899. 304].

Respondent 2.8 representing the *Ahl l-Sunnat wa jama'at* stated:

12. Can you describe your understanding of the concepts of *Wali* and *Wilayah*?

Well, a wali is a friend of God, a saint figure.......and wilayah is the authority exercised by such a person...as I understand it there is also authority exercised by a caliph in Islamic history.........

The fact that the Prophet is 'the *wali* of the believers' [Surah 5. 55] - 'friends and protectors' - indicates that he was informed [in this world] by God to befriend those whom God had befriended or chosen in the first instance. In al-Tustari's perspective there does not seem to exist a distinction between prophets in general and *awliya* although the *siddiqun* hold a lower position. The charismata of the *awliya* are signs *ayat* of God's power, and al-Tustari asserts a claim for himself to be the 'proof of God' [*hujjat Allah*]. The Baghdad Sufi Abu Sa'id al-Kharraz [d. 300/890/1] by contrast criticises 'certain Sufis' who were placing the *awliya* above the prophets'. For al-Kharraz, prophecy is grace in addition to *wilayah* as prophets were *awliya* prior to their becoming prophets. The *awliya* are therefore placed under a prophet who is known by name, on whose behalf they call people to God, and their charismatic gifts are obviously of a secondary nature by comparison with the signs that are given uniquely to the prophets.

In his writing al-Tirmidhi further elevates the status of the Prophet Muhammad whilst at the same time raising his own status: the *awliya* and the 'ordinary' prophets are seen as ranking lower than a law giving prophet, amongst whom Muhammad is unquestionably the greatest. In him all parts of prophecy are united - he being perfect in this sense and without sin [*ma'sum*]. However, Muhammad's position as the 'seal of the prophets' means just this according to Tirmidhi not that he was the last ion time. There is also the somewhat mysterious concept of the 'Seal of *Awliya*' which will be sent at the end of the age. Tirmidhi often uses Shi'i ideas and language albeit not Ismai'li terms yet not with Shi'i apologetic intent. For example, he denies that the family of the Prophet is a kinship family. The danger of confusion however, was felt to be present so that al-Hujwiri in his summary of Tirmidhi's teachings omits the doctrine of the 'Seal' from his work. It was ibn Arabi [560/1164-638/1240] who brought the concept to light once more summarising his understanding of the relationship between the two Seals in this proposition:

> 'The Seal of the Prophets, considered from the point of view of his own *wilayah* , is toward the One who seals the *wilayah* in the same position as all the other prophets and lawgiving messengers are toward him, for he is *wali,* lawgiving messenger and prophet.'.

[al-Arabi: 1978.1. 344]

But this *wilayah* is divided into two and thus, there are two Seals of *wilayah* in this Sufi teaching: Jesus, Seal of 'general *wilayah* ' and Ibn Arabi himself, or his spiritual reality the seal of the 'Particular Muhammad *wilayah*'. This teaching, whilst polemical is balanced by the need for both seals of *wilayah* to follow the law of the Seal of Prophecy; all therefore is placed under the primordial 'reality of Muhammad', also termed 'the realities of reality' or the *logos.*

2.4. 8 'Ali as Wali of God.

Wali therefore, with its multiple meanings in different contexts can be taken to signify 'friend' or 'master'. It is a term used in both Sufi and Shi'a thought with considerable overlapping of understanding. Scholars such as Corbin have described the differences between the two streams in terms of the two verbal nouns stemming from *wali.* Whilst Sufism emphasised *wilaya*, which refers to the 'sainthood' described in 1.4.7 *supra,* the Shi'a have also used the term *walayah* which refers to the initiatory authority of the Imams. More recently, Chodkiewicz [1993. 21-25] has altered these understandings showing that *walayah* describes the state of sainthood, both in Qur'anic thought and in early Sufism. The term *wilaya* however, describes the actual exercise of the office of *wali*/saint. The term *wali* in Shi'ism is first applied to 'Ali, as the temporal and spiritual successor to the Prophet. Thus the Prophet initiated 'Ali into his guidance and inheritance, so through Fatima, Hasan and Husayn, the initiation into knowledge continued for the subsequent Imams.

The Imams are those spiritual friends or supporters who can guide or initiate humankind into the esoteric truths of faith. The relationship between the believer and the Imam by analogy is parallel to that between Muhammad and 'Ali. As 'Ali was a close relation or client *mawla* of the Prophet, so the believer is a relative or client of the Imam. *Walaya* as adherence to the Imams is balanced by *wilaya* as the Imams exercise their guidance over and for the believers. Here is an example of the sharing of understanding between Sufism and Shi'a as the initiatic authority of the *pirs* plays a significant role in Sufism and mystical experience is important in Shi'ism [Nasr: 1973. 104-120]. If the prophetic line is concerned with the exoteric or outer features and practices of faith then the Imamate are responsible for the inner aspects, which bring spiritual light. Thus 'Ali is declared as an Imam to be both friend to guide on the straight path and a master in this progress. As such, there is a closeness of understanding to that given to the Sufi Shaykhs, who have been ready to acknowledge and honour 'Ali as the source of many of their lineages *silsilah*. Frequent Hadith from Sunni sources endorse the role of 'Ali as *wali* to God and the Prophet:

> On one occasion when four of the Muslims complained to the Prophet concerning something that 'Ali had done, the Prophet grew angry and said: 'What do you want from 'Ali? 'Ali is from me and I am from 'Ali. He is the guardian [*wali*] of every believer after me.

[al-Tirmidhi: 1292/1875. II, 320].

There is a question however, on the rationale of placing 'Ali on a par with the Prophet in Shi'ite understanding and in some Sufi perceptions. The Prophet's uncle, al-Abbas, who was to become an important figure in the Abassid self-legitimisation, is excluded when he is a closer blood relation to Muhammad than 'Ali. In Shi'a thought 'Ali is placed close to the Prophet on the grounds of favour or grace shown to him by

God. He is not a prophet for such a role is completed with Muhammad but is rather entrusted with the offices of vicegerent, Imam and wali, specific offices. In being wali or saint, 'Ali is given the role of interpreter of the revelation in its esoteric sense. Thus, 'Ali becomes in Shi'a understanding the 'brother' of the Prophet. By contrast Al-Abbas did not receive such favour and in both Shi'a and most Sufi thought is neither part of the *Ahl i-Bayt* nor part of the immediate circle of the Prophet's family. In describing the spiritual position of 'Ali in relation to the Prophet, Al-Kulayni relates a tradition in which 'Ali states:

> I am God's division between heaven and hell. I am the Sceptre and the Sign. All the angels and the spirit have recognised my attributes as they did those of Muhammad.
>
> [al-Kulayni: 1388/1968. 1.196-198].

The Shi'a go further than Sufi influenced Sunni Muslims in their perceptions of 'Ali as he is so central to their theological structure. The fifth Imam, al-Baqir equates the qualities of 'Ali with those of the Prophet and stresses that to obey 'Ali is the same as showing obedience to the Prophet [al-Kulayni: 1388/1968. 1. 196]. Al-Mufid draws from the experience of the debate with the Najran Christians and the Qur'anic statements in Surah 33. 33 that 'Ali has an equality with Muhammad. In that event is declared the purification of the Prophet's inner family circle of 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn:

> ...a merit which no other member of the Muslim community can share with them, or even approach their position.
>
> [al-Mufid: 1981. 119].

Consequently, by comparison with Sunni Sufi writings the place of 'Ali in Shi'ite understandings and literature is an exalted status tending to hyperbole at times. There is an emphasis upon the unity of the Imamate line with the Prophet, which stems from the Shi'a traditions relating the closeness of the *Ahl i-Bayt* and their unity. Al-Tabari relates traditions, which are endorsed by others from Abu Hurayra a companion of the Prophet that Muhammad said:

> I, you, Fatima, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn were created of the same clay, and our partisans [the Shi'ites] were created from the remainder of that clay.
>
> [al-Tabari: 1383/1963. 29, 24, 96].

Al-Tabari takes another tradition with a similar exaltation of 'Ali:

> I am a tree whose main branch in Fatima, whose pollen is 'Ali, whose fruit is al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and whose leaves are the partisans [Shiites] and lovers of my community.
>
> [al-Tabari: 1383/1963. 40, 63].

The understandings of *walaya, wilayah* and *wali* are shared between Shi'a and Sunni Sufi alike and are based upon a name also shared between God the Friend, the friends of God and those friends who enjoy a particular intimacy with the Transcendent. The contrasting understandings will focus on whether as the Shi'a would affirm the Prophet's family and the Imams are *ma'sum* or as Sufi thinkers would state *mahfuz*. Such intimacy in Shi'a thought is held by the Imams after the *Ahl i-Bayt,* and for Sunni Sufi movements the *pirs* and *shaykhs.* An ordinary believer may not be able in these worldviews to obtain such direct access to God as these examples of *wilayah* could obtain. By grace, the exercise of their *wilayah* believers may indeed to approach the divine.

Chapter 2.

Ali, the Imam of God.

2.5 Usage of terms.

In general the Arabic term *Imam* signifies 'leader' or 'master' within the community. Less technically it is often used to mean a leading authority in a field of scholarship or to the leader of a local community. As a technical term within Islamic Law and Theology, it refers to the legitimate supreme leader of the wider Muslim community as much as to the leader of the *Salat* prayer in any *Masjid* [mosque]. Thus the Imamate has several uses and understandings as a spiritual office as well as the socio-political usage.

2.5.1 Imam: amongst the Sunni traditions.

The term *Imam* with a literal meaning of 'one who stands before' was in usage during the Prophet's life for the person who led the prayers *salat* in the mosque. Consequently, it would either be the Prophet himself or someone designated by him. It was a crucial factor in the succession crisis after the Prophet's death that during his final illness, Abu Bakr was appointed *Imam* to lead the cycle of prayer at Medina. In later Sunni literature however, the title is sometimes a synonym for caliph because a significant symbolic function of the caliph was to lead the Friday community prayers. Thus, although technically any believer within the Sunni tradition who is knowledgeable about the Qur'an can lead the *ummah* in prayer as Imam, the title is reserved for scholars and jurists. In this way the title is applied to the 'Four Imams' after whom the Sunni Law Schools are named viz.: Hanifa, Malik, Shafi'i, and Hanbal.

Mawardi [d 436/1058], who taught on the nature of the caliphate lived at a time of its weakest expression under the Abbasids. He saw the office as subject to election and laid down both qualifications for the Electoral College in spite of the fact that he knew every caliph had been nominated by his predecessor. In citing the instance of the election of Abu Bakr in 11/632, Mawardi states that the electors at that time represented the then whole community of believers. In the election of Abu Bakr Mawardi considers that there were five electors; 'Umar appointed six before he died but authorities hold that three would be sufficient. This is on the analogy that a contract of marriage may be drawn up with two witnesses present. With other opinions that only one elector is necessary, Mawardi offers the proposal that a caliph may appoint his own successor whilst maintaining the form of an election [Mawardi: 5-7].

However, as with putative electors, in Mawardi's thesis the caliphal candidate must have certain qualities. He will be a member of the Quraysh, of mature age, sound moral character and free from all physical or mental weaknesses. In addition he will have sufficient knowledge of the Law for adjudication in court, and sound judgement for government and military leadership. In summing up the role Mawardi considers that the caliph is concerned with 'the defence of religion and the administration of the state' [Arnold: 1924. 72].

Ibn Khaldun [733/1332 – 808/1406], who also addressed the issue of the caliphate, used the terms Imam and caliph interchangeably:

> The office may be termed the Khalifat or the Imamate indifferently. When the Khalif is called Imam, he is, as it were, compared with the leader whose movements in prayer must be imitated by the whole assembly. The great Imamate is a term used of the Caliph's office.
>
> [Guillaume: 1924. 159].

In his theory he proposes that the best foundation for government is religion. For humankind to be guided and to be prepared for eternity it is essential that a Prophet provides that knowledge, or one who takes the place of a Prophet, the Caliph. The difference between a caliph and a 'King' is that the former functions and rules by *shari'ah* Divine Law whereas the latter governs by human reason, which has no reference to eternity. Thus, Ibn Khaldun bases the necessity of an Imam or Caliph on revelation and that only with divine order will human life be ordered and civilised.

> ...the Khalifah exists by divine appointment, and God makes him His vicegerent in order to guide men to the good and turn them away from the evil.
>
> [Arnold: 1924. 75].

Ibn Khaldun therefore, defined the caliph's role as the preservation of religion and thus the world, and 'the political leadership of the world' [Guillaume: 1924. 159]. There are parallels here with the Shi'a understanding of the Imamate although there are key differences. Firstly and crucially, the caliphal office in Sunni thought although it has a distinctively spiritual aspect, does not require its holder to be a direct descendant of the Prophet, and does not enjoy an imputed sanctity of character,

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caliphs to be the most excellent and suitable candidates of humankind after the Prophet to become his due successors.

A different assessment however, was to be made of the later caliphs, many of whom following the death of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib in 40/661 were to be seen as unjust and lacking in true piety. Although the holders of the office might be seen as lacking in spirituality nonetheless Sunni doctrine saw the office itself as sanctioned and upheld divinely and emphasised that every Muslim was obligated to obey and actively to support this indispensable institution and thus its current holder whatever his qualities. The sole provision would be the violation of the religious law. Hanbali, and therefore conservative jurists, equated power and legal right, permitting an Imamate/caliphate was legitimate even by the overthrow of the previous holder of the office. In this view, the sole prerequisite for a rightful holder was for him to be a Muslim of the Prophet's own tribe, the Quraysh.

Another Sunni legal school, that of al-Shafi'i, proposed a less radical view. The Shafi'i jurist tradition did not restrict the Imamate to the most virtuous of the community and accepted that a less than ideal candidate might be appointed particularly if this would avoid discord. In their estimate the later caliphate was in essence a legitimate continuance of the ideal rule of the first four caliphs and any subsequent caliphs were to be judged by the standards the original four had established. On this foundation they created a comprehensive legal doctrine concerning the qualifications, electoral procedures, privileges and responsibilities of the Imam. This scholarly process is exemplified in the work of al-Mawardi with *Al-*

ahkam al-sultaniyyah 'The Statutes of Government, which came to be regarded as a classical statement of Sunni perspectives on the Imamate.

2.5.2 The Classical Approach.

With its affirmation that the Imamate as an institution was essential for legitimising all acts of genuine Islamic government, Sunni theory considered that it was necessary to establish an Imam as its supreme head at all times. Thus it permitted for only a single Imam at anytime and rivalry, even if such a claimant caliph were in control of a part of the Islamic world, was illegitimate. The qualities of an Imam were to be of Qurayshi descent, male, free and with the capacity to maintain and carry out political and military duties of the office. Knowledge of the religious law was necessary for the office's function of judge, and integrity for legal testimony. Appointment was by election or nomination by his predecessor. These alternatives were modelled upon the examples of 'Umar, who had been appointed by Abu Bakr but who, before his death established an electoral college *shura* 'The Council of Six' of six key companions of the Prophet to choose his own successor. The subsequent caliphs after 'Ali ibn Abu Talib invariably appointed a son as their successor.

In the situation of an election, the law allowed any Muslim of due character, wisdom and with knowledge of the office qualified to be an elector. The Electoral College could be as small as one person, which reflected that in a contested succession it was the most powerful leaders who wee in a position effectively to impose a candidate of their choice. Thus the 'election' was not seen as a matter of free choice but the appointment of the most 'excellent' in religious terms. Any other nominee was only acceptable with due and proper reason or cause. The forfeiture of the office occurred through loss of freedom or physical unfitness with many Shafi'i scholars holding that it would be forfeited by loss of integrity, immorality, unorthodoxy or injustice. Denied by Hanbali and Hanafi authorities, there was no absolute means to apply this ruling.

The responsibilities of the Imamate included the guardianship of the faith against heresy; maintaining the peace of *Dar ul-Islam* 'the land of Islam'; its defence; the conduct of *jihad* holy war when the supremacy of Islam was contested by external enemies; administering the law and due punishments [*hudud*] in accordance with the religious law; and the collection of legal charity *Zakat*. In addition, one fifth of war plunder collected was due to the Imam, whilst the expenditure of the revenues according to law, and the appointment of reliable officials for delegated duties came within his tasks.

2.5.3 *Ahl i-Sunnat* [Barelwi] Understandings.

In examining the understandings of the concept of the *Imam* amongst the Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at expression a fuller discussion of its attitudes to Shi'a concepts and practices is found in chapter 2. 2.1. The key figure within the movement, Imam Ahmad Raza Khan [1856-1921], declined to have any social interaction with Shi'a people in his lifetime [Sanyal: 1996. 208].

In his perspective the Shi'a of his time were guilty of extremism in their views that the Qur'an in its current state was defective, that 'Ali and the Imams were superior to the non-legislative prophets, and that the first three caliphs of Islam were usurpers [Sanyal: 1996. 210].

Whilst opposing the Shi'a ideas of the Imamate and the significance of the place of 'Ali in relation to the Prophet, there are parallels between Ahmad Raza Khan's views on the caliphate and Shi'a models of the Imams. Ahmad Raza Khan set out his understanding of the caliphate in a 1920 fatwa [Raza Khan: 1980. 95] basing his arguments on theories from classical jurist such as al-Mawardi. The concept assumed that immaterial of his worldly power the caliph held his office as the deputy *na'ib* of the Prophet. His authority was spiritual and owed itself to the necessity that he came from the Quraysh tribe and thus, a descendant of the Prophet. He moved onto develop a further list of qualities which resemble al-Mawardi's viz, that the caliph be a freeman, male, intelligent and mature, and powerful [Raza Khan: 1980, 47-56]. Basing his argument on the Hadith, Raza Khan went on to state that the authentic caliphate had ceased to exist after 132/749 with the accession of the Abbasid dynasty. The next caliph would therefore be the Mahdi and in the interim all Muslim rulers were simply 'sultans' and not caliphs lacking the Qurayshi lineage [Raza Khan: 1980. 74]. The argument is based upon a hadith in which the Prophet is said to have commented that once the caliphate had come to the Banu 'Abbas it would not be given to anyone until the Madhi [Sanyal: 1996. 288]. Raza Khan's views are both an interpretation of the caliphate and a contemporary criticism of movements seeking to establish the Khilafat Movement in British India with pro-independence ideologies. He was also opposed to scholars who held that Qurayshi lineage was non-essential to a valid caliphate. As will be noted *infra* such opinions are entirely consistent with

Ahmad Raza Khan's Prophet-centred vision of Islam and would pay little heed to criticisms that such views emphasised a spiritual hierarchy and were non-egalitarian. The Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at's perspectives on the spiritual leadership of the *ummah* owe much to Hadith readings, a classical expression such as al-Mawardi's [but not Ibn Khaldun's], polemic against the Shi'a, and contemporary political aspirations in nineteenth and twentieth century India. As in Raza Khan's world-view as a whole however, a guiding factor would be the intense devotional focus upon the Prophet, which would both explicitly separate his movement from, yet also paradoxically align it with Shi'a understandings.

2.5.4 Developments in the *Khilafat*

The end of the Abbasid caliphal rule at Baghdad in 656/1258 following the Mongol invasion left Sunni jurists with a fresh situation to address. With the shadow Abbasid caliphate established by the Mamluk sultans in Cairo being ignored, the claims of the Ottoman leadership to the caliphate after its conquest of Egypt in 923/1517 gained popular support. In general however, the Sunni legists saw the caliphate as in abeyance. By relying on the legal principle of necessity *darurah*, they argued that since the exercise of power was essential to the Imamate, its authority had fallen upon the actual rulers of the majority of the Muslim world whosoever they might be. This continued until the formal abolition of the caliphate by the Turkish National Assembly in 1924.

Although some 'modernist' thinkers have rejected the necessity of a caliphate at all, others amongst them have advocated its return and restoration. The ideal model is the caliphate of the 'Four Rightly Guided' holders of the office in distinction to its subsequent dynastic evolution. The emphasis has been on the principle of consultation [*shura*] frequently seen as implying the need of an elected council to advise such a supreme leader and the principle of election to the position rather than nomination by a predecessor.

2.5.5 Shi'a Understandings: Hadith.

The motivation amongst Sunni Muslims was essentially focused upon supporting the actual holder of the supreme position of power to continue as guarantor of Islamic unity. By contrast the Shi'a traditions have stressed primarily the principle of the moral and spiritual legitimacy of the Imam as successor to the Prophet and indeed descended from the Prophet himself and his family. With the exception of the Zaydiyah stream, the majority of Shi'a Imams never held political office or any sphere of literal power. The Shi'a have always believed that apart from Imam Ali, the other three immediate successors to the Prophet as historical caliphs were illegitimate usurpers. As a consequence, and devoid of political power, the Imams of the Shi'a traditions have always been endowed with significant religious authority and central to the tradition.

Twelver Shi'a doctrine rests the Imamate upon the consistent need for a divinely guided, infallible guide and teacher of faith. This requirement was both authenticated by reason and perceived to be mandated by the Prophet himself.

In Shi'a belief the Imamate is not restricted to Islam but is intrinsic to a primordial succession of Imams from the time of the first prophet Adam. Included in this line are figures such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad who have embraced both prophethood and Imamate in themselves. At no time therefore, it is affirmed, has there been a time when the world has been without an Imam who is Guide *Hadi,* and Proof *Hujja* of God for humankind. The fifth Imam, Muhammad al-Baqir is related as saying:

> God has not left the earth, since the death of Adam, without there being on it an Imam guiding the people to God. He is the Proof of God to his servants and the earth will not remain without the Proof of God to his servants.
>
> [Majlisi: 1956-1972. XXIII. 22, no 25].

The sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq is also reported to have declared that:

> Were there to remain on the earth but two men, one of them would be the Proof of God.
>
> [Majlisi: 1956-1972. XXIII. 22, no 24].

With the death of the Prophet in 11/632 such divine guidance would be provided henceforth by the Imams commencing with the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, 'Ali ibn Abu Talib. Like the prophets before them, they were to be divinely protected from sin and error *ma'sum*, sharing a similar authority and purpose albeit they would not be bearers of fresh revelation or scriptures. The Imamate consequently can be termed as assuming a parallel significance to prophecy. Ignorance or moral disobedience on the part of any of the Imams formed unfaithfulness tantamount to unbelief or ignorance on the part of a prophet. Within the Twelver and Sevener traditions, the Imamate is handed down by divine designation *nass* from one Imam to his successor. Twelver Shi'a therefore could perceive themselves as the true *ummah* with the companions of the Prophet, including Abu Bakr, with the community who accepted him appointed to the *khilafat*, as apostate. Following the grandsons of the Prophet, Imams Hasan and Husayn, the Imamate was transferred only from father to son from the descendants of Husayn.

Twelver-Shi'a jurists have argued that ‘Ali was designated as *Imam* in his own lifetime at Ghadir Khumm by the Prophet and therefore God, on the grounds of Qur'anic and Hadith evidence, and on the basis of reason *'aql*. Thus Shi'a commentators would refer to some hundred verses *ayahs* from the Qur'an to support their case.

The *Hadith* Traditions cited amongst the Shi'a are numerous and invariably identical with Sunni versions and compilations. As such Sunni consider them as largely sound *sabih*. The key differences lie in the context and circumstances of the traditions with contestation of the Shi'a interpretations given to them. In a similar way, it is the Twelver jurists' interpretation of the alleged circumstances of a revelation or a saying of the Prophet rather than its esoteric significance that causes debate between them and Sunni scholars, and this leads the Shi'a to seek to prove their propositions.

As noted above, the third reason for Shi'is' belief in the designation of 'Ali as Imam is Reason *'aql.* All three authors of the four canonical *fiqh* books of Shi'ism: Muhammad ibn Ya'qub al-Kulini [d. 328/939], Shaykh ibn Babawayhi Sadduq [c 306/918-381/991] and Nasir al-Din Muhammad ibn Hasan al-Tusi [385/995-995/1067] adopt this three-fold foundation for their positions. These *fiqh* texts are largely compendia of traditions of jurisprudence for believers and leave no room for argument and debate. Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Mufid [338/950-413/1022] was a pupil of Sadduq, in turn teaching al-Tusi, supported his exposition of Twelver-Shi'a beliefs by dialectic rather from pure tradition by itself. Alongside his presentation there are several works of the Twelver-Shi'a scholar of the parallel Khani period viz: Hasan ibn Yusuf ibn Kutabhar al-Hilli [d. 726/1326], which are wholly devoted to treatment of the Imamate. The most detailed is the *Hahj al-Haqq* in which al-Hilli argues as follows:

> 'All the Imamis claim that the Imam after the Prophet of God is Ali ibn Abi Talib. The Sunnis say that he is Abu Bakr ibn Quhafah, then Umar ibn al-Khattab, then Uthman ibn Affan and then Ali ibn Abi Talib. Thus they have contradicted reason and tradition. As for reason, this stands for the proofs whichj establish the Imamate of the Commander of the Believers by way of reasoning and they are: first, the Imam must be infallible and no-one has been infallible by general agreement except Ali. Hence it follows that he is the Imam. Secondly, it is necessary that the Imam should not have committed a sin before attaining the office of the Imamate...The Shaykhs before Islam worshipped idols. Thus they cannot be Imams. Hence, it comes about that Ali is the Imam because of the negation of the alternative. Thirdly, he [the Imam] must be designated explicitly in addition to Ali. Hence, no one of the three can be an Imam. Fourthly, the Imam must be better than his subjects must and no one than Ali was better. Hence, it comes about that he is the Imam. Fifthly, the Imamate is a universal leadership [*wilayatun 'ammatun*]. Truly, the right claim is established by asceticism [*zuhd*], knowledge [*ilm*], worship [*ibadat*], courage [*haja'ah*], and faith [*iman*]. It will be stated later that in Ali all these qualities were found in the most perfect and incomparable manner. Thus he is the Imam.'

[al-Hilli: 1389/1969. 32-33].

On the question of whether or not it was Abu Bakr or 'Ali who was the legitimate successor of the Prophet, al-Hilli uses arguments such as these:

'...either the Prophet appointed him Imam or he did not. The second proposition is false for two reasons. First the appointment of an Imam is incumbent upon him [Muhammad] to perfect religion and to appoint its guardian. And if the Messenger of Allah had failed to do that he would have failed doing what was incumbent upon him [*wajib*]. Secondly, his [Muhammad's] compassion and loving kindness for the ....[*mukallafin*], his care for their interest was so great that he taught them the places of purification [*istinaja*] and impurity [*janabah*] and other things that are of far less importance than the Imamate, it is impossible that he should not in his wisdom and immunity from sin, point out for them whom they should consult in their problems, their private affairs and their needs. Hence, the first [proposition i.e. that he appointed an Imam] is true. And the mass of the people did not claim that anyone had been appointed except Ali and Abu Bakr. Hence, it follows that the one appointed was either Ali or Abu Bakr. The second proposition is false, thus the first one is true.

Now the second proposition is false for several reasons: firstly, if Abu Bakr was the one appointed, then the making of his authority dependable on the authority of the people [*bay'ah*] was sin and an impugnment of the Imamate. Secondly, if he were the one appointed, then he would have mentioned it and he would have claimed it at the time when the people acknowledged him, or after or before it...But he did not claim it, hence he was not the one appointed. Thirdly, if he had not been the one appointed, then his asking to be excused from the succession, when he said 'Excuse me, I am not the best of you when Ali is among you' would have been a great sin, for it would have been a rejection of Allah as His Messenger. Hence, it would have been an impugnment of the Imamate. Fourthly, if he had been the one appointed he would not have been in doubt at his death as to the worthiness of the succession. But being in doubt, he said:

'O that I had asked the Messenger whether in this matter the right was with the *Ansara* or not!'

Fifthly, if he had been the one appointed, the Messenger of Allah would not have commanded him to go out with the army of Usamah ibn Zayd. Therefore, the Messenger of Allah was ill, and his soul had warned him of death so that he said:

'My soul warns me of my death, and am about to be taken, because Jibril used to present himself to me with the Qur'an once every year and this year represented himself to me with it twice.'

If the situation was thus and the Imam had been Abu Bakr, then he [the Prophet] would have commanded him not to go with Usamah. But he urged all to go out, and he cured all that would stay behind him, and find fault with them when they did so.

Sixthly, if there is no one except Ali among these for whom the Imamate is claimed who is fit for it, then he is singled out for it. The first statement is true for they were all just [*zalimin*] because of their previous unbelief, as the word of the Most High says: "My covenant embraceth not evil-doers" [S 2.118]'

[BHA paras 208-209].

Clearly, these arguments depend upon the acceptance of a basic premise of the Twelver-Shi'a definition of prophecy and the Imamate. So for specific Twelver-Shi'a interpretation of the Qur'anic verses and Hadith citations in support of Ali's claim to the Imamate the following are examples of their reasoning.

Qur'anic verses of 'Cursing' al-*Mubalah* are used to show that 'Ali, since he is seen as equivalent to the Prophet, is the best of men after the Prophet, because 'his equal is also the best, otherwise he would not be equal to him.' [BHA para 195].

And since he is equal to him, he is the best. Therefore, Ali is Imam after Muhammad because it would be evil for the worse [*mafdul*] to take precedence over the better [*afdal*]'

[BHA para 195].

Thus the Qur'anic verse runs:

'And [the unbelievers]
Plotted and planned,
And God too planned,
And the best of planners
Is God'

[S3. 54].

The interpretation is as follows:

'When Muhammad sent letters to the Kings of Rumi and Persia etc...summoning them to embrace Islam, the Christians of the Najran in South Arabia assembled in their Church to decide what they ought to do. After various proposals had been made as to whether they should fight or yield or become Muslims, someone arose and quoted the words of Jesus to Simon Peter promising to send Ahmad the Paraqalit [the *Parakletos*] whose son should conquer the world. But the reply was given that Muhammad had no offspring so they could not refer to him. Then they brought out the *Kitab al-Jami* and read from it the story of Adam, how Adam once saw a brilliant light with other lights about it, and was told by Allah that these lights were five of his descendants, namely, Muhammad and his *Wasir*, and his daughter and his two grandsons who should succeed him. Ibrahim also saw a similar vision, and the same thing was predicted by Musa and 'Isa. So, it was decided to send all their leaders and learned men to Medina to see whether Muhammad was the one whose coming 'Isa had predicted. Accordingly, they entered Medina in great pomp, found Muhammad in the Mosque, and debated with him the question of the person of Christ. At last, unable to convince one another they proposed to him that they should refer the matter to Allah, and call down his curse on whoever lied. Then the verse of *Muhahadah* [curing one another] came down.

Muhammad agreed and the contest was set for the next day. The Christians said to one another "If Muhammad comes out with royal pomp, then we shall conquer, for he is only an earthly ruler; but if he comes out with only a few godly people then he is the prophet and will prevail".

The next day, the Christian leaders came forward with their sons and wives. All the people of Medina came out with banners waving to witness the conflict. Later in the morning Muhammad came forth with the family of the household only...
Ali, Fatima, al-Hassan, and al-Husayn, and Muhammad took his place with them under a cloak hung between two small trees. The Christians asked "Why these people and not the chief leaders of the people?" Muhammad replied that Allah had so ordered him. Then the Christians remembering what they had read in the Kitab *al-Jami* turned pale and retired for they feared to make the trial recognising Muhammad as the Prophet whom 'Isa had predicted. Muhammad raised his hands to pray and at once the mountains trembled and smoke covered the earth. If he had spoken but one word, the world would have been destroyed. So the Christians agreed to make peace and to pay an annual tribute.'

[ibn Hanbal ; 1313/1896. 1. 151]

On the basis of this story the meaning of 'sons' and 'wives' in the Qur'anic verse:

'Come let us summon our sons and your sons....'

[S 3. 61].

Is explained to mean that Muhammad came with his family i.e. Fatima, and not his wife, Hasan and Husayn, instead of his sons. 'Yourselves' is taken to signify the Christian leaders and 'ourselves' to be Muhammad and 'Ali. However, this is not equivalent to Muhammad's self being as Ali's selfhood because such a notion would be impossible. Therefore the contention is that Ali is 'like Muhammad' and equal to him.

Another argument used by Twelver-Shi'a jurists to prove that Ali is the designated successor of the Prophet is that in this particular situation the Prophet had asked Ali to join him in the prayer under the cloak and no-one else of the Companions [BHA:].

And he who is needed is better than anyone else, especially in these great events [the debate with the Najran Christians].

[S 4. 125].

Sunni interpretation of this *ayah* is broadly the same as the Twelver-Shi'a stating that Muhammad came to the debate with 'Ali, Fatima, al-Hasan, and al-Husayn but they dispute the conclusions which Twelver-Shi'a jurists draw from it on the equality of Ali with the Prophet [ibn Hanbal; 1313/1896. 1. 174-175].

'O ye who believe!
Take not for your friends
And protectors those
Who take your religion
For a mockery or sport.'

[S 5. 60].

This *ayah* is quoted by Twelver-Jurists as a clear reference in the Qur'an to the appointment of Ali as Imam by God. 'Ye who believe...' is seen as referring to Ali on the basis of a story about a beggar who entered the *Masjid* in Medina. He continued begging amongst the men at prayer with who were Muhammad and 'Ali.

No one responded to the beggar except 'Ali, who whilst he was bowing in worship [*raki'an*] gave to the poor man his ring. At that moment Muhammad had prayed that his leadership burden of the people would be lightened as God had helped Musa and 'strengthened his arm' [Surah 28. 34-35] by appointing Aaron to be his helper. The Angel Gabriel, it is stated, came to Muhammad and reminded him of this verse.

To overcome the grammatical difficulty arising from the relative pronoun being plural [*alladhina*] 'believe' Tabarsi explains that the plural is used in Arabic when speaking of someone with respect [*li' ltafkaim*] [Tarbarsi ; 1386/1966. 103]. In *Hadith* literature, the saying:

Your rank after me is like that of Aaron to Moses, except there is no prophet after me. [ibn Hanbal; 1313/1896. 1. 170].

Is claimed by Sunnis to have been said by the Prophet to 'Ali to placate him when 'Ali had complained to the Prophet about his command that he should stay in charge of Medina during the Battle of *Tabuk* [8/630]. The Twelver-Shi'a consider this tradition to be an explicit designation of 'Ali as Imam by Muhammad and cite it in connection with the Qur'anic verse *subahalah* cited above. They contend that the Prophet intended by this statement, which was repeated by him on several occasions apart from the Battle of *Tabuk*, to confer upon ‘Ali all the functions or rank [*marabib*] which Aaron in his context had possessed except of course that of prophecy. The Prophet, they add, was speaking clearly and his words contained both positive and negative inferences [Muslim: 1349/1930. 2. 323-324]. Consequently, on this basis the Twelver jurists would claim that the succession of Ali is established.

The Twelver-Shi'a interpretation of the Qur'anic verses and the *Hadiths* in 'establishing' the Imamate of ‘Ali may be assessed as somewhat forced. However, when this approach is placed in the context of controversy with Sunni scholars and hermeneutic the arguments of the Twelver-Shi'a can be recognised as equivalent in strength to their Sunni opponents. Integral to any fair assessment would involve a study of the virtues and characteristics *al-manaqib* or *al-fada'it* of the Companions and the Umayyad Caliphs. What is common to both Twelver-Shi'a and Sunni alike is the shared background to their debate. The interpretation which is placed upon this and which in turn varies in either case is again often forced. The Twelver-Shi'a argument seems to establish ‘Ali as the legal and due Caliph after the death of the Prophet inspite of the historical fact that Abu Bakr was actually elected as Caliph. Furthermore, by establishing the Imamate of ‘Ali after Muhammad, Twelver-Shi'a jurists seek to establish him as *hujja* [proof] after the Prophet i.e. supreme authority for the interpretation of the Qur'an and the authentication of the *Hadiths* and their interpretation. Consequently, they ascribe to his sayings the same power and validity of inspiration which also belongs to the sayings and practices of the Prophet himself.

2.5.6 The Development of Shi'a Understandings of the Imamate.

The Shi'a understanding of the Imamate owes itself considerably to the sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq [83/702–148/765] with the designation being projected retrospectively onto 'Ali, Hasan, Husayn, 'Ali Zayn al-Abadin [the sole member of 'Ali's family to survive Karbala] and Muhammad al-Baqir to create a complete line from the Prophet Muhammad onwards. By the eighth century the hopes of the disparate pro-'Alid groups were frustrated as the 'hidden' Muhammad ibn al-Hanafiyya had not returned from Mount Radwa, the Zaydi and Kaysanite rebellions had failed, and the Abbasid rebellion had not borne as much fruit as had been hoped. Ja'far al-Sadiq began to seem to be the genuine successor of the Husaynid line with adherents even from extremist *ghulat* groups recognising him. [Halm: 1991. 29 & Momem: 1985. 18]. Certainly from this period the *Imami* tradition begins to appear in a recognisable form reinforced by the formation around Ja'far's name of a new school of law which would serve both the Twelver and Sevener movements.

Later it was asserted that Ja'far al-Sadiq held a text of gnostic teachings, which had been passed down the Prophet's descendants from Muhammad, which nourished his teachings. For Ja'far, as for the succeeding Shi'a emphases, the Imamate was as much a true part of Islam as Prophethood. Al-Hilli commented:

> ...the Imamate is a kindness from God, for, when people have a head and a true guide whom...they obey...they are in a healthy condition.

[Watt: 1994b. 103 citing al-Hilli: 1928].

In Shi'a understanding therefore, as much as the Prophet Muhammad had been predestined as the final prophet and messenger, so each Imam was equally designated for that function even before the creation of the world. Each holder of that office was to be designated *nass* by his predecessor, albeit in providence there would never be any doubt about the actual one to be so chosen. This rests on the belief that between humankind and God there will always be an intermediary – such a role was fulfilled by the Prophet and with his absence and the cessation of prophecy such a role falls to the Imamate.

> The Imam must be immune from sin. Otherwise there would be an infinite regress. An Imam is needed for the restraining of the oppressor from oppressing and the avenging of the oppressed on the oppressor...
>
> [Watt: 1994b. 103 citing al-Hilli: 1928].

As a descendant of the Prophet, an Imam could be expected to share many of his qualities, traits and nature. He,

> ...cannot be chosen by fallible men and left to the vicissitudes of history but must fulfil certain conditions of principle, be perfectly learned in religious matters, be absolutely just and equitable, be perfect, free from any fault [*ma'sum*], be the most perfect man [*afzal*] of his time',
>
> [Richard: 1995. 6].

In addition, the Imam will share in the Prophet's essence *al-haqiqah,* and in his *nur* light. This *nur* was created by God primordially and incarnated in the Prophet along with, in Shi'a thought, 'Ali. Surah 5. 15 is taken to support this understanding of the Prophet's nature.

> People of the Book! Our apostle has come to reveal to you much of what you have hidden of the Scriptures, and to forgive you much. A light has come to you from God and a glorious Book, with which God will guide to the paths of peace those that seek to please Him; He will lead them by His will from darkness to light; He will guide them to a straight path.

[S 5. 15].

There is also a *Hadith Qudsi, which* has God stating through Muhammad:

> I have created the light of Muhammad from the light of my own existence.

[al-Halveti: 1992. 94].

This light is perceived to be present within the Imamate, which guarantees their guidance for believers, and to attract people to the truth. As has been noted, the Imams are, like the prophetic line, infallible with salvation resting upon recognition of, and following the Imam's teaching. This is as significant as declaring the *shahadah* and fulfilling aspects of the *ibadat.* In time, Shi'a thought would indicate that not only had Muhammad and 'Ali with the Imams pre-existed but the Family of the Prophet i.e. including Fatima had done so as well. The Family had an eternally pre-ordained function to fulfil and the key event of Karbala also had an eternal pre-existent significance [Ayoub: 1978. 124; Momem: 1985. 288; Richard: 1995.31-32]. The Imam therefore for Shi'a understanding, as will be seen in the discussion of the role of the *Qutb* pole in Sufi thought,

> ...is not only the head of the community but also the visible proof *hujja* of the truth of the divine revelation, without his presence the world would not exist for a single moment.
>
> [Halm: 1991. 45].

Historically the Imams were never able after 'Ali to exercise any political power although the concept that they merged in themselves both spiritual and temporal authority was maintained. The Shi'a experience both before the watershed times of the sixth Imam and following the lesser and greater occultations would be one of suffering and marginalisation. The Shi'a increasingly would see themselves as bearing the true expression of Islam against its compromising enemies. There were personified in Mu'awiya and in particular in Yazid his son and successor. Such is the 'Karbala Paradigm'.

> ...for Shi'as, history went awry at the source; a sense of injustice is thus rooted in the way the community perceives the world.
>
> [Ahmed: 1988. 57].

In 260/874 the death of the eleventh Imam, Abu Muhammad Hasan ibn 'Ali [232/844-260/873-874] without an apparent successor son precipitated a crisis which was eventually resolved by the affirmation that a son, Abu'l-Qasim Muhammad ibn Hasan had in fact been born to him and continued to live albeit concealed from human sight *ghaybah*. The twelfth Imam was linked with the eschatological *Madhi* or *Qa'im* who is expected to manifest himself before the end of this age and thence to rule in power and glory. Since the twelfth Imam is believed to be present on earth although invisible, and can show himself to some of the faithful believers in person or through dreams, he is believed in essence to be able to fulfil his function of conveying infallible divine guidance. The more pragmatic legal, oversight and governmental responsibilities have either been gradually assumed in his absence by the Shi'a *ulama* who assert a general deputyship of the Imamate during his concealment, or have been placed in abeyance. It was the work of the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini [1903-1989] to develop this theological-political construct into a workable concept in the *wilayat i-faqih* [rule of the jurisprudent] for the post 1979 Iranian Revolution constitution and state.

Twelver Shi'a tradition gives to the line of Imams considerable supernatural powers and accounts on miracles. To them is ascribed command of languages and skills, whilst God also endows them with knowledge of anything they may wish to know 'what has been and what will be'. As they inherit the supernatural knowledge of the Prophet they receive knowledge of both the outward and obvious meaning of Qur'anic text [exoteric] and its inner, hidden meaning [esoteric]. Consequently, they possess the revealed scriptures as well as texts containing gnostic understandings, which include certain books of the Prophet: *Al-Jafr* [The Divination],;*As-Sahifa* [The Book]; *Al-Jami* [The Compilation]; and *Mashaf Fatima* [The Book of Fatima], a book revealed to Fatima consoling her on the death of her father, Muhammad. In addition the Imams hold a copy of the Qur'an written by ‘Ali with his commentary upon the text [Momem: 1985. 150]. An angel speaking to them gives divine guidance, though unlike the messenger prophets, he remains invisible to them.

In popular devotion, the Imams have always been seen as intercessors and consequently pilgrimage to their tombs has been an inspiration to the Shi'a communities. Under the later influence of Sufi and Ismai'li thought, the Twelver Shi'a jurists defined the essence of the Imamate in terms of *wilayah* [friend of God] and as the esoteric aspect of prophecy. Thus the Imams became the initiators into hidden truths. From readings of Qur'anic texts the Imams were given terms and titles which described them as 'the light of God', 'his witnesses', his 'signs', as those who are 'firm in the knowledge of God', as God's 'vicegerents on earth' and the 'gates' through whom he may be approached.

2.5.7 The Ismai'li Perspective.

Following the death of the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq [80/699-148/765], a dispute followed over the succession to the Imamate amongst the Shi'a. The expected successor, al-Sadiq's eldest son, Isma'il died during his father's lifetime. A younger brother, Abu'l-Hasan Musa ibn Ja'far al Kazim succeeded on his father's demise and indeed it was held that he had been so designated by Ja'far as successor. However, a group of adherents to Isma'il's cause held that a son, Muhammad, born to Isma'il was the rightful successor. These separated into the movement, which adopted his name, i.e. the *Ismai'lis.*

The nascent movement retained the concept of a permanent, divinely guided leader for the community but evolved a cyclical understanding of the history and progress of religion. For the Isma'iliyah prophetic revelation passes through seven eras with each of the first six periods initiated by a 'speaker prophet'. This figure brings a scripture with a law and then follows a 'silent fundament'. The 'fundament' reveals the hidden truth in the sacred text and is followed in turn by a series of seven Imams. The seventh of this sequence becomes the 'speaker' of the next era of time. The Imam takes the place of the 'speaker prophet' in both guarding and applying the literal aspects of the law whilst his *hujjah* [proof] representing the rank below the Imam in the hierarchy, succeeds the fundament in showing esoteric spiritual truths to the initiate.

The sixth era in Isma'ili thought concerns the Prophet Muhammad and Islam. Thus person of 'Ali is seen as the fundament and in due chronological sequence Ja'far as-Sadiq's grandson Muhammad ibn Isma'il [d.138/755] as the seventh Imam since Hasan. He was expected, after his appearance from concealment to rise, becoming the seventh 'speaker prophet', who was identified with the Madhi and Qa'im. These early Isma'ili expectations were altered in the tenth century with the rise of the Fatimid dynasty in Egypt and the assertion of the Fatimid caliphs to be Imams. Some Ismai'li supporters of the Fatimid authority discerned the first Fatimid Caliph as the Madhi whilst others maintained an expectation that Muhammad ibn Isma'il would return with the Fatimid rulers as his vicegerents. Such eschatological expectations receded as the dynasty continued with the caliphal line being increasingly seen as an ongoing succession of Imams within the era of Islam.

After the fall of the Fatimid dynasty [909/1171], the Isma'iliyah tradition survived in two branches. The infant son of the Fatimid caliph al-Amir [d.525/1130], al-Tayyib was recognised as Imam and thus gave his name to them as *Tayyibiyah.* His fate is unknown, his death denied and the Tayyibiyah hold that he remains in contact with his community and shall return to this realm. Identification with the eschatological figure of the Qa'im however, does not follow. In later Tayyibic gnostic thought, the

Imam is described as possessing both a human [*nasut*] and a divine nature [*lahut*]. This human, physical nature is called the 'camphoric figure' being composed of the clouds, which emerge from the souls of believers three days after their deaths. The divine nature by contrast is seen as a temple of light formed by the assembly of light points of the souls of believers and the hierarchy of teachers. This Light Temple will following the death of the Imam, rise to the horizon of the Tenth Intellect, the demiurge, where it will meet with the temples of other Imams to form the complete light temple of the Qa'im.

The *Nizari* branch of the movement saw a son of the Fatimid caliph, al-Mustansir [d. 487/1094], Nizar as their Imam and has maintained adherence to a line of present Imams leading for the great majority into contemporary times to the Aga Khans. The proclamation of the resurrection [*qiyamah*] in 559/1164 and the resulting return to an age of concealment initiated major reforms of the esoteric doctrine of the Imamate. These figures were to be raised above the prophets in status. Each Imam was a potential Qa'im and thus held the necessary authority to suspend or apply the religious law as needs required. In his spiritual essence the Imam was perceived as the manifestation of the divine word, the cause of the spiritual world. The faithful believers would gain resurrection or spiritual birth by recognising this essence of the Imam. During the period of the concealment, spiritual union with the Imam was restricted to his *hujjah*, who was his gate for the faithful and the sole source for spiritual truth.

2.5.8 The Zaydiyah.

In contrast to the other Shi'a streams, the Zaydiyah reject the concept that their Imams are protected divinely from error and sin. Nor do they hold to a line of hereditary Imams. In this perspective, the first three Imams viz. 'Ali, Hasan, and Husayn were appointed by the Prophet by clear directive whilst subsequent Imams are appointed by popular acclamation and acceptance from any who are descended from the line of Hasan or Husayn, and who rise against illegitimate rulers. As in Sunni law, there is also an emphasis upon learning, integrity, spirituality, competence to give religious rulings, and bravery. If the Imam is found guilty of moral offence the office is seen to be forfeited. Thus only the most highly regarded candidate for the Imamate rise to claim it. The successful aspirant thus makes a call for allegiance from the community, which results in active and binding support from the faithful.

In the Zaydi legal theory there has always to be a qualified Imam, although in their history there have been lengthy periods of abeyance. Many Alid Zaydi rulers either did not claim the Imamate or were not recognised as such by subsequent Zaydi consensus. Some were considered to be 'restricted Imams' or 'summoners' [*du'at*] because of the lack of religious learning with limited authority.

2.5.9 The Kharijites.

A third tradition within the Shi'a rejected the Sunni caliphate and its developments on uncompromising principles of justice and moral integrity. The Kharijites affirmed that an Imam loses his status by compromising or violating any aspect of the religious law and therefore had to be removed, if necessary by force. The offending Imam and his followers were to be treated as unbelievers unless they moved to repentance. In their perspective 'Uthman and 'Ali were at first legitimate Imams who became unfaithful by committing illegal acts. Their deaths by assassination were then considered legal and righteous. Any associates of such caliphs could only be seen as implicated in their misdeeds and unfaithfulness. The Kharijites would also come to reject the elitist understanding that the Imamate was restricted to the Quraysh. For them any qualified Muslim, whether slave or free, Arab or non-Arab was eligible for the Imamate. An extreme view extended this right to women as well. In other respects this view accorded with general Sunni principles with stress upon the Qur'anic duty of:

'Commanding what is proper,
and prohibiting what is reprehensible'

[S 7. 199].

With the parallel understanding of the Imam's duty to lead *jihad* against unfaithful Muslims.

Of the Kharijites, only their most moderate expression in the *Ibadiyah* were to survive into the modern age. Taking more accommodating attitudes towards the majority of Islam, they came to accept different types of Imams, which corresponded to the four states in which the faithful might find themselves in facing hostility. Included in these were the state of manifestation, when the community was strong enough to resist an enemy; a state of self-sacrifice when a group of the faithful could seek martyrdom in attempting to overcome an enemy; the state of defence, when the community could only plan to withstand an enemy; and the state of concealment, when the faithful were compelled to live under a repressive regime and were forced to practice dissimulation [*taqiyya*]. Only an Imam in the state of manifestation could exercise all the features and functions of the Imamate.

2.5.10 'Ali: as Imam.

From the death of the Prophet in 11/632 until a century later, the regions ruled and held by Muslims and their faith extended from the west with Spain and Morocco to the borders of India in the east [Hodgson: 1961. 1. 90]. During this time the office of the caliph within Sunnism and the Imam within Shi'ism developed in parallel. They were to share many characteristics. However, even with the eventual size of the Muslim domains the office and understanding of caliph was deeply rooted in the role of an Arab nomadic tribal chieftain. In essence, the caliph as successor to the Prophet was head of state but his identity extended beyond the 'secular' dimension. He would also, as has been noted perform religious functions such as leading public prayers and giving the Friday sermon *khutbah.* Once the caliph's actual authority declined, he was believed to legitimate the legal and socials systems of Islam as based upon the *shari'ah.* The caliph however, could not serve as a prophet as the time of revelation was past.

Whilst the distinctive form of Shi'ism became defined first with the sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq and then with the occultation of the twelfth Imam, Muhammad al-Mahdi, there is a traceable tendency from the time of 'Ali for adherents to the

Prophet's family and lineage to give their allegiance to him and his family [Watt: 1968. 43]. Such a tendency, which evolved into a 'party', and then into an expression of Islam considered that Muhammad's line was charismatically endowed, which set them apart from other humankind at least in *barrack* grace/blessing if not strictly in ontological being. The notion of inheritance of charisma is a familiar one in Arab understandings and although it became associated with Persian/Iranian thought as such, it originally flowed into Shi'a thought from an Arab source. During a turbulent period of the Umayyad era [68/687 – 117/737] when the idea of a 'hidden Imam' developed. Abu Muhammad 'Ali ibn Husayn [Zaynu'l-'Abidin] [38/658 – 94/712 or 95/713] was seen as the fourth Imam after his father al-Husayn. Too weak to engage in the fighting at Karbala, he had survived and finally been released by the Caliph Yazid into retirement. With the death of Yazid [64/683] the Umayyad structure fell into disarray with aspirants opposed to the dynasty seeking power. 'Abd'ullah ibn Zubayr seized Kufa having earlier self-proclaimed himself caliph of the Hijaz. A parallel but pro-'Alid movement led by Mukhtar ath-Thaqafi [d. 67/686 or 68/687] put forward the cause of Muhammad al-Hanafiyya the third son of 'Ali by a wife of the Hanifa tribe. Mukhtar brought into the support for the pro-'Ali line a considerable Iranian Muslim contingent. With the defeat and death of Mukhtar the cause of al-Hanafiyya did not diminish in strength and even with his own death in 71/700 the concept that he was in hiding grew amongst his followers. In the meantime, the fourth Imam, Zaynu'l-'Abidin maintained himself in seclusion from the surrounding political events. A seed however, had been sown for the concept of a secluded leader and the concept of a 'hidden Imam' would more fully mature with the twelfth Imam over a century later in 260/874. During both the Umayyad and Abbasid periods the idea of a secluded alternative leader to the de facto authority appeared in the nascent

Shi'ite consciousness. This allowed a sense of dissatisfaction with the present government to be implied without the necessity of active rebellion against a regime whose time would be seen as limited.

There are consequently, common features to both Shi'a understandings of Imamate and to Sunni focused ideas of the caliphate. In both traditions it is firmly held that prophecy concluded with the death of Muhammad although the Shi'a stress that an aspect of the prophetic office viz., the guidance of humanity and interpretation of the *shari'ah* continued with the Imamate. Ideally, an element of such guidance is to be found in the Sunni perception of the caliphate as enunciated by for example, ibn Khaldun and al-Mawardi but it is an ideal and not explicit in practice. Nonetheless, there are some qualities held as essential in both traditions for these key figures: maturity, intelligence, religious knowledge, and nomination as the best candidate for the office. The origins of both offices lie in Arab thought forms and their understandings of authority. A search for leadership beyond the human level came to suffuse these concepts, with the Shi'a construction taking increasingly defined shape in its highly developed portrayal of the Imamate. Such parallel constructs of the Caliph and the Imam did not derive from one another as much as find themselves formed in parallel to one another. The Shi'a in particular were to define the imamate in contrast and in opposition to the dominant Sunni authority.

Chapter 2.

Imam Ali, Martyr for God.

2.6.1 *Shahid:* Classical Understandings of Martyrdom.

A community awards the mark of a martyr to those men and women who have offered their lives either voluntarily in solidarity with their group or in conflict with another, ideologically or religiously opposing group. The martyr thus becomes a representative, a champion or defender of their society and its beliefs. In this sense martyrs may be seen as embracing suicide as judicial, political, religious or military authorities will kill most individuals who stand against them. These power holders may execute the martyr as a potential or actual threat to their society's well being, social values or physical safety be it as a criminal or heretic. Both the societies of the one killed and those who undertake the execution have to address and control the significance of the death of the person or group of opponents: is it to be understood by the wider world as martyrdom or as a judicial and justifiable event?

The literal meaning of the Greek term *marturos* is 'witness' and as such martyrs may be seen as members or representatives of a politically disestablished movement who are seeking self-determination in opposition to an established power bloc. Martyrdom can therefore be a move to break through ideological or political boundaries of authority with a religious or quasi-religious power. A minority's religious assertions may justify opposition to a more powerful enemy, who in turn exercises a violent reaction to the threat:

> It is one of the great paradoxes of religious history that sacred injunctions designed to contain the worst impulses of men and women have, when wedded to secular power, so often been vehicles to express those very passions.
>
> [Jacoby: 1983. 99].

Such a confrontation between even a minority movement and its more powerful and dominant adversary can strengthen the martyr's people, unite their ongoing opposition as they seek some reformulation of charismatic leadership, and create a structure to maintain their cause and identity. The very example of the martyr can provide an exemplification of faith and courage, which will encourage the followers to maintain their own faith and 'witness' in the face of continued persecution under a cruel enemy. By contrast, the martyrdom and the ongoing opposition of the martyr remnant can strengthen the enemy's determination to suppress any oppositionalist movements.

Intrinsic to martyrdom is the creation of a distinct ideology in opposition to the prevailing political culture or accepted religious norm of a society. Such an alternative ideology serves to form symbols around which a movement mobilises itself, principles around which the new society rallies, which reinforce or even cast into radical forms quite ordinary political or economic tensions.

Classical Hellenistic philosophy saw ideologies as cultural realities within which lay the seeds of good and evil forces. The dualism of Zoroastrianism proposed an autonomous evil force, which in the inter-testamental period of Judaism was adapted for a monotheistic faith [Clarke: 1998. 15]. The Christian faith brought together the idea of the individual hero/martyr figure, which flowed into Islamic thought, with its ideas of martyrdom, the promise of paradise and rescue from the danger of eternal punishment, and the capacity of the martyrs to intercede for the present realm. These aspects also indicated a readiness to identify oneself with the Prophet, who had himself faced persecution and danger for his faithfulness to his call as the Messenger of God. Particularly within Islam, but also true for Christian and Jewish thought, it is clear that martyrdom is a free, altruistic and voluntary action. The death, as in *jihad,* is also sacralised in distinction to the situation where death occurs as an accident of the situation.

2.6.2 *Shahid:* **Martyrdom in Islam.**

In both Sunni and Shi'a thought there are several kinds of martyr *shahid* embracing 'battlefield martyrs' and 'martyrs in the next world only'. For the former there is an added description that they are 'martyrs both in this world and the next' *shuhada al-dunya wa l'akhira* in the sense that they are regarded as martyrs in this world with special burial rites and in the next world. For such martyred figures, it is generally agreed that there will be no necessity for their bodies to be washed *ghusl* as they are seen as having purified themselves by the nature of their sacrifice. It is also generally affirmed that a martyred person may be buried in his or her blood stained garments as a sign of their status on the Day of Judgement. A more contentious issue centres upon prayer around such martyrs – within Zaydi and Twelver Shi'a thought the precedent of the Prophet praying over those lost at the Battle of Uhud in 3/625 provided sufficient justification for the practice. By contrast the Shafi'i and Maliki schools do not advocate such patterns. The issue in dispute rests on whether the martyrs are purified by the nature of their deaths as to be beyond the need of intercession or whether no one can dispense with the need of a plea to God for mercy and forgiveness.

In the flow of Islamic history there were named companions and blood relations of the Prophet who accepted martyrdom such as his uncle Hamza ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, and his cousin Dja'far ibn Abu Talib. Considerable numbers died in the expansion of Islam after the Prophet's death and subsequently in such times as the European crusades in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries with its resonance of *jihad* [Sivan: 1968. 60-62].

In so many ways the concept of a martyr's death has suffused the Muslim imagination and consciousness until modern times. The martyrdom thus becomes the zenith of spiritual ambition for many with its guarantee of God's reward and approbation. The Qur'anic references to the state of martyrdom affirms both their closeness to God and the nature of their rewards:

> Whoso obeys Allah and the messenger, they are with those unto whom Allah has shown favour, of the Prophets and the saints and the martyrs and the righteous. They are the company
>
> [S 4. 69].

And

> And call not those who are slain in the way of Allah 'dead'. No, they are living, only you do not perceive it.
>
> [S2. 154].

Or

And those who fought in the way of Allah, He renders not their actions vain. He will guide them and improve their state. And bring them into the Garden, which he has made known to them.

[S 47. 4-6].

The promises awaiting the martyr in eternity include absolute forgiveness of sin, protection from any pains in the grave, a crown of glory, and the company of seventy two *houris* and the capacity to intercede for some seventy of his or her relations.

Certainly within Shi'a understanding and practice the reception of news concerning the death of a relation in conflict for the faith is received with joy. The meaning of the martyr's death overcomes any personal grief with the martyr's family being surrounded with admiration and recognition.

The second type of martyr is termed 'martyrs in the next world only' shuhada *al-akhira*, who will not be accorded distinctive burial rites. This category includes a variety of individual situations whose estimations as martyrs are debated by the schools of law. One case includes those who lose their lives in conflict against rebels. The Twelver Shi'a and the Zaydi traditions see 'rebels' as unbelievers rising against a legitimate ruler and thus to die in opposition to them is to fall as a 'battlefield martyr'. Consequently, 'Ali's supporters who died at the battles of the Camel, Siffin and al-Nahrawan are such martyrs. For Sunni jurists those who fall in fighting rebels, who are seen as in error are victims of injustice. A second category concerns those who die in defending themselves, their families and their property against robbery. Whilst

Hanbalis consider such deaths to be in the nature of 'battlefield martyrs' most jurists see such losses as 'martyrs in the next world' only. A third situation examines whether a person who dies accidentally for example by his own weapon may be seen as a genuine 'battlefield martyr'. Twelver Shi'a and some Hanbali jurists would see this as a genuine example of 'battlefield martyrdom' with other schools disputing this conclusion.

After the early expansion of Islam the numbers of 'battlefield martyrs' declined and jurists were faced with examining and deciding upon further definitions of 'martyrdom'. A typology evolved which described three key patterns of martyrdom within Islam. The first type included those who died violent or premature deaths, with a further defining in to those who perished in the service of God; those who died for their beliefs; those who died through disease or accident; and the 'martyrs of love'. Those who died violent or premature deaths would include the three caliphs after Abu Bakr viz., 'Umar, 'Uthman, and 'Ali. The Prophet Muhammad might also be considered such a martyr due to the suggestion that his final illness and death were attributed to eating poisoned mutton given him by Zaynab ibn al-Harith at the time of the battle of Khaybar. Within the second type of Muslims enduring violent deaths are some of the earliest adherents to the Prophet, the Sufi al-Hallaj [Massignon: 1982. I. 560-645] and certainly amongst the Twelver Shi'a the most prominent martyrs are the Imams beginning with 'Ali, and in particular his son Husayn. Husayn is an exemplar in this area as he is regarded as having died self-sacrificially in seeking to revive the genuine faith of Islam and as a 'battlefield martyr' contending against overwhelming odds. Amongst those who died through disease or accident are numbered victims of contagious illness or fatal accidents, and women dying in childbirth, all of whom are granted the status of martyr in recompense for their suffering. 'Martyrs of love' are seen as those who have been forced to leave their homes in times of persecution and die in a foreign land.

A second refinement of 'martyrdom' saw those who died a natural death whilst engaged in pilgrimage, or a journey searching for knowledge. Amongst the Twelver Shi'a there is a firm contention that those who have lived a faithful life waging a personal *jihad* against their lower nature *nafs* are to be seen as a *shadid* fighting alongside the Prophet in this greater *jihad* of the soul. This would accord with Sufi traditions, which understand the greater *jihad* in a similar manner. Goldhizer [1971 II. 352] considers that the expansion of the concept of *shadid* to include examples of non-violent death was in reaction to the search of many seeking self-sacrifice.

A third refining of understanding of the martyr status reflects Sufi approaches to the theme with 'Living Martyrs' i.e. those who have entered the greater *jihad* in their lives. Al-Sulami [d. 412/1021] considered that the 'battlefield martyr' was a martyr externally but the true martyr is the one whose lower nature *nafs* had been overcome and whose life continues in such a vein [Kohlberg: 1979. 1. 30].

In Qur'anic understanding as well as in the developed Muslim tradition therefore, there is a rich variety of understandings of martyrdom to be found in Shi'a as much as in Sunni Sufi traditions. The former is dominated as will be examined *infra* by the nature of the deaths of 'Ali and Husayn. It can be argued that 'Ali and his younger son died as 'battlefield martyrs' with their intentions of reviving the Prophet's tradition of Islam. Yet a believer's inner feelings and determination are only known to God so much so that individuals can only be assessed by their outward actions. Thus those who might enter battle with the wrong intentions or who sought persecution for their beliefs may still be seen as genuine *shadid.*

2.6.3 Social Theory of Martyrdom.

Martyrdom will transform a mundane event into one of sacred significance. There are the parallels between the change of the sacrificial animal into one of sacred quality, and this sacrality is transmitted to the worshippers as they either consume the offering, or it is consumed in the fire of sacrifice to the deity, which they observe and from which merit, forgiveness or grace is received. The human martyr also may receive the status of sanctity, with a conviction of purpose about his or her death. The martyr may face death as a challenge to the dominant authority, which perpetrates it. The martyr may also face death, as did al-Hallaj [244/857-309/922] with a conviction of unity with the divine. Ayoub discusses at length an Islamic approach to and understanding of redemptive suffering in martyrdom with reference to the death of Imam Husayn at Karbala in 61/680. Consequently, the martyr becomes in his or her death, a symbol around which a new, alternative society will form, dependent upon a charismatic authority and as a remnant rejects the prevailing power seeking instead a new spiritual order.

2.6.4. Political Dimension of Martyrdom.

Martyrdom is concerned with power and its distribution or balance between two opposing societies or religio-political groups. Thus, examples of martyrdom even prior to the advent of Islam offer paradigms of such actions. The Maccabean Revolt is a model of a minority community resistant to an alien power whose action in desecrating the Jerusalem Temple gave a focal point for resistance. The Christian communities between 64 and 308 experienced martyrdom under official persecution initially from the Jewish and then the Roman authorities. Romans 13 reflects an early Christian understanding of the situation. Thus a martyr seeks to reduce a political authority by challenging its legitimacy whether based on literal force or on a sacred claim to authority. The potential martyr is invariably a rival claimant to authority, which is always seeking political legitimisation. Moreover, this struggle, as we have noted *supra* with regard to the conflict between the Ummayyad family and the family of the Prophet, can be an internal experience. the apparent political authority may share faith and at least some overt religious ideals with an opposing minority.

Classic examples of such an internal dimension between the 'martyred' and the 'orthodox' are exemplified in the interactions between individual Sufis and the *ulama* with the political *khilafat.* Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadhani challenged the authorities, whose claims to power rested upon the *Qur'an* and the *sunnah,* with the traditions deriving from them. By contrast, al-Hamadhani laid claim to authority stemming from esoteric sources which left him independent of such written law and his own self-authenticating authority.

2.6.5 The Exemplary Status of Martyrdom.

A martyr, who loses his or her life, becomes a model for other and lesser forms of martyrdom. Thus in Islam, the idea of a martyr's death 'in the way of Allah' is equally applied to the giving of the required *zakat* in the form of *sadaqah.* In this sense asceticism, as self-inflicted is a minor form of martyrdom. In this context there is as much an adversary as an external political or religious authority to be overcome, the bodily desires and weaknesses. The overcoming of such desires is a propaedeutic for the overcoming of such an enemy.

Moreover, the martyr is a model of the possibility of such an action. A painful exemplary death can lead to the attraction and recruitment of other martyrs. It can also deter weak commitment and deviating from the course of the 'true faith'. If a member of a minority group can demonstrate such devotion even to death is a direct challenge to the dominant power, which has orchestrated the martyr's death. As such, the death has to be as public and dramatic as possible; a private action will fail in this exemplary purpose. Within the Islamic tradition, the concept of *shahid* 'martyr' is closely linked with that of *jihad* 'struggle for the faith' and its very public nature. Ibn Rushd [520/1126 - 595/1198] wrote in his work *Bidayat al-mujtahid* that for *shahids* martyrdom had to be known, voluntary and public [Peters: 1977].

2.6.6 A Typology of Martyrdom.

The task of martyrdom and the features of those who chose this action is formed by the political power of the groups that are in conflict. Societies that are crescive, self-determining, and in decline will create distinctive forms of martyrs. The growth of the Christian tradition may be compared to that of Islam some centuries later. The first Christian generations were a crescive minority, both politically passive and assertive, who drew considerable violence upon themselves at different times. The first generations of Islam were self-determining and the early martyrs were pro-active. The society's understanding of worldly action is a second and important influence upon what form of martyrdom is chosen. Weber [1922. 227-229] describes these as either 'otherworldly' or 'innerworldly' in orientation. The active politically focused innerworldly approach is a minor model for both crescive and declining societies but a major pattern for a self-determining society. Elements of a society motivated by innerworldly foci tend not to be in good relations with otherworldly members. The internal schismatic, who are often in a crescive stage tend to heterodoxy and offer a religious otherworldly position to the ruling self-determining authority.

A crescive society is one that is powerless in political terms but is beginning to discover an ideology and purpose. A model of this type is the resistance of Jewish groups to the Hellenizing tendencies of the Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV Epiphanes [r. 175 – 164 BCE] with the elderly Eleazar choosing martyrdom rather than submission to the consumption of pork in the desecrated Jerusalem Temple. This exemplar of martyrdom is revived in the second century ce revolt against Roman power in which Aqiva ben Yosef joined forces with Bar Kochba ‘Son of the Star’, the military leader of the rebellion, whom he saw as the Messiah. Martyrdom in this approach is not so much concerned with political power as with belief that in the obedience of the martyr to God rather than to man the Kingdom of God comes imminent. The model of such martyrdom within the Christian tradition is that of Jesus the Christ in his crucifixion, which in turn became the example for subsequent Christian adherents to imitate. Martyrdom in such crescive societies creates a form of authority and increases the sense of struggle, unifying the group as a remnant minority and clearly states its identity as a 'pure' movement. This crescive society will find itself moved towards a self-determination' stage and the goals of political as much as spiritual autonomy from the then prevailing power. The death of the ideal martyr is a significant step into and a continual motivation in the ongoing struggle, which may turn events in favour of the minority. Moving forward to ever increasing responsibility and possibly freedom, the culture of the once minority society can alter - the ideals of the first martyr may not be shared by the succeeding generations of the movement.

The death of a martyr has effects upon both the minority groups as much as the majority power. The cruel nature of so many martyrdoms leaves few uncommitted observers, so much so that the minority group does find a fresh solidarity and purpose in its struggle. Providing an exemplar martyr strengthens the group identity to stand against the overbearing authority. Martyrdom places ideology before physical survival and confirms the priority of the message, law and culture of the movement ahead of self-preservation. Thus a crescive society, as in the case of the Christian and Muslim traditions, which values individual life and survival before its corporate and cultural life does not move to become a self-determining society in the next stage [Peters: 1977].

A 'self-determining society' has achieved political control over its existence. The Umayyad establishment in Damascus from 41/661 - 131/749 is such a societal example. Martyrs both for and in opposition to such rule are activist, assist the authority in its expansion, and create a counter culture, which has to be controlled in turn by the government. Such a self-determining authority will face internal dissenters. In the Muslim context the first generation of Muslims who gathered around the Prophet in the Makkan period [1/622 - 8/630] faced persecution from the Arab *jahilliya* adherents during their crescive experience. Further martyrdom occurred in the transitional time from the crescive to the self-determining stages as Ali, and then of his sons supremely Husayn [5/624 -61/680], were killed. The latter at the hands of Yazid [d. 64/683], the son of the caliph Mu'awiya [d. 60/680] was to remove a rival claimant from the house of the Prophet to the *khilafat* of the community.

A politically decaying society loses its capacity to be self-determining because of the loss of political independence as its symbols lose their power to hold adherents. Indeed martyrs may not always be forthcoming. However, in a crescive movement martyrs can be drawn from two sources: from the intimate cell group, which support the martyrs in their ordeals and from the 'nobility' or leadership of the movement.

Preparation for this form of death is, as has been noted *supra,* nourished by the intensity of support within a cell group. The motivation has been assessed as ranging from the promise of redemption and entry to paradise, to Augustine's way of seeing this as a means of avoiding sin, to altruism. This latter motive is the main key to understanding this form of action, which transcends a person's desire for self-preservation. The martyr therefore finds support from his or her intimates, creates a pattern of belief, which provides a sense of meaning for imminent death, which is contiguous with their understanding of purpose. Included in this ideology will be an understanding of the sanctity of the mission, however fatalistic it may be, the satanic quality of the opposition, and the possibility that the drama fall within divine providence and is foreordained.

A Typology of Martyrdom based upon autonomy and orientation to action. [adapted: Peters, F.E. 'Martyrdom' in *Encyclopaedia of Religion:* [Eliade, M. ed] Macmillan, 1987]

Levels of Societal Autonomy:

Predominant Orientations:	Crescive	Self-Determining	Decaying
Otherworldly	Early Christian & Muslim martyrs	Holocaust Victims Missionary martyrs	Pogrom
Innerworldly		Muslim *shahid*	Anti-martyrs

Figure 2.

A potential danger for crescive moments is that some adherents will initiate open politically focused action in an act of martyrdom before the whole group is ready to support such a policy. Martyrdom may be a precipitate action and becomes a temporary alternative to open rebellion against a dominant power. Consequently, a movement must attempt to control its potential martyrs as much as any other extremist members. The community therefore has to establish guidelines and principles to control its members and their activities. A movement or party also has to exhibit control when martyrdom is unexpected. A Muslim is forbidden to seek death or to engage with an enemy with a view to death. The very search for martyrdom *talab al-shahadah* is approximate to suicide for the jurists with a modern scholar Shaykh Mahmud Shaltiut permitting the community only three reasons for a declaration of *jihad*: the repulsion of an aggressor; the protection of the *daw'ah* of Islam; and the defence of religious freedom viz. the liberty of Muslims to practice their faith in an otherwise non-Muslim country [Peters: 1977]. Ibn Rushd's rules for the selection of candidates for *jihad* are reminders of Hebrew Biblical terms of recruitment, which limited military service by age, marital status, and attitudes towards danger [Ibn Rushd: 1888. 1 145]. Based on Surah 8. 66 the *shadid* was to reject the possibility of fighting if the enemy was twice the number of his own forces but had to retreat before a larger number [Shaltiut: 1977]. In the context of 'Ali's death it is feasible to understand his death as coming in a crescive stage of the progress of the Muslim *ummah,* when he did not actively seek such a demise but died as one seeking the unity of Islam.

2.6.7 Opposition to martyrs by a dominant authority.

A powerful group may attempt to inhibit martyrdom when such deaths can be used to propagandise an alternative ideology. There are clear patterns for assimilating some of the opposition who then become examples of attenuating resistance: co-optive and repressive. Potential martyrs may depend on a charismatic authority leading them as dissenters forward. Thus, any approach, which will rationalise and justify the existing social order undermines the attraction of martyrdom. Parallel to the co-optive pattern, repressive action by a government may remove the threat of martyr-orientated cells and isolate them from lines of support. This latter measure may reach extremes of cruelty as the oppositionalist minority loses more adherents than it can recruit; the risk is that such actions can radicalise the minority and nourish its attacks against the authorities.

Of particular importance is the control of the significance of the martyrdom, which can be moulded by myths surrounding the event. The martyr may see his or her impending fate as a moral response and stand against evil. In contrast, the dominant society perceives the event of martyrdom as righteous and justifiable punishment for a deviant, trusts that the opposition is now suppressed and will have no sequel with justice having been done. Yet the most potent method which any authority can bring to bear upon a resistant minority is to make the martyrdom appear futile and obsolescent, the action of a hopelessly dangerous and lost group in the face of a rational bureaucratic government. In the context of the immediate post Muhammadan Muslim community there is an ambiguity about the deaths of 'Ali and for example, those of the Kharijites who finally opposed him. Both instances display signs of 'martyrdom', as their supporters would see both as having fallen in a holy struggle *jihad.*

2.6.8 The Concept of Martyrdom in Islam.

Shahada martyrdom within Islamic thought is linked with the concept of *jihad* holy struggle. This in turn is linked with the doctrine of seeking the good and rejecting what is evil al-*amr bi 'l-maruf,* which finds its source in the doctrine of the absolute unity *tauhid* of God. Focusing however, upon the relationship between *shahada* and *jihad* in the Qur'anic text one finds both words frequently associated.

Those who have embraced the Faith, and those that have fled their land and *fought* for the cause of God, may hope for God's mercy. God is merciful and forgiving.

[S. 2. 218]

Let those who would exchange the life of this world for the hereafter, fight *for* the cause of God; whoever *fights* for the cause of God, whether he dies or triumphs, on him We shall bestow a rich recompense.

[S 4. 74]

Those that have since embraced the Faith and fled their homes and *fought* with you - they too are your brothers

[S 8. 76].

The term *shahada* derives from the Arabic verbal root shahada, which signifies 'to see'. 'to witness', 'to testify', and 'to become a model and paradigm'. Consequently a *shahid* is the one who sees and witnesses:

We have made you a just community, so that you may *testify* against mankind and that your own Apostle may *testify* against you.

[S 2. 142].

The believer therefore may *witness* to his or her faith physically as much as verbally with a readiness to surrender life as a *shahid.* In this way, and by his or her struggle *jihad* they become models or paradigms worthy to be emulated and followed.

Intrinsic to this process is understanding of truth *al-haqq* with the sense of struggling and fighting for it even to death. Thus *jihad* is the means of establishing the truth, which may well lead to becoming *shahid* for its very declarartion. In Muslim understanding therefore there is neither struggle *jihad* nor witness *shahada* outside the sphere of declaring truth, martyrdom is preceded by struggle for the faith, and struggle for faith is a commitment for the truth.

To find the truth then guidance or a guide is necessary, who in classic Muslim thought is embodied as the Prophet Muhammad. The guide practises what he offers and is the clear model of the truth.

> The Apostle believes in what has been revealed to him by his Lord, and so do the faithful.
>
> [S 2. 285]

Muhammad is the model *shahid* and paradigm *uswa* of the message and from his *Sunna* the community draw their sense of being models or witnesses *shuhada* in turn. Those who continue this lineage of struggle in the cause of truth are *mujahids* and *shahids* at the same time.

2.6.9 Martyrdom within Twelver Shi'ism.

The doctrine of the Imamate as offering guidance and exemplary leadership is foundational for Shi'ism. This concept of leadership includes three elements: the *Imam* who leads; those who are being led *shi'a* or *mamum;* and the practice of leadership and guidance. The *Imams* are the living embodiments of the faith for those who are following them.

> The entire history of Shi'ism, and the lives of the Shi'i Imams should be appreciated in this context and within the concept of the Imamate which is the leading of humanity to salvation by guiding them to the full implementation of Allah's code for the salvation of humanity...
>
> [Ezzati: 1984. 123].

The assassination of Ali at the hands of Ibn Muljam, a surviving Kharijite in the mosque at Kufah in 40/661 is a form of martyrdom, albeit not at the hands of a more powerful enemy. Both his sons, Hasan who succeeded Ali yet abdicated after only some six months reign, and Husayn with his death at Karbala fall more clearly into the model of martyr as the *Shi'at 'Ali* was moving from crescive to self-determing societal stages.

> Hated by the Kharijites, resisted by the Syrians and Mu'awiya's party, unloved by the Hijazi supporters of Zubayr, abandoned by the neutrals of Adhruh, and not well supported even by the Kufans to whom at least he could guarantee the presence of their treasury - nonetheless, Ali still had a zealous personal party.
>
> [Hodgson: 1955. 2].

The event of Karbala, the very death of Husayn on *Ashura*, and the struggle which he undertook, plays a very crucial role in the evolution of Shi'a thought. As such this event is portrayed by the Shi'a as the model event by which to understand martyrdom and its inspiration for the believers.

2.6.10 Imam Husayn: Karbala and 'martyrdom'.

The death of Imam Husayn ibn ‘Ali [4/626 – 61/680] is perceived by the majority of Muslims of both Sunni and Shi'a traditions as a major tragedy for the nascent Muslim community. In those expressions where devotion to the Prophet and his immediate family are at a high premium the 'martyrdom' of Husayn is the focus of both public and personal observance. In Shi'a traditions this observance is a period when the public identity of their position is most evident and their faith is most profoundly renewed. Husayn's death, and the deaths of Ali and Hasan, are a series of climaxes in the conspiracy to derail the Prophet's authentic mission itself. This perception transcends the Shi'a historical consciousness from the Safavid era to the late twentieth century in Iran. As Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi notes:

> Husayn was killed already on the day of al-Saqifa.

[al-Majlisi: 1983. XLV 328].

and from the twentieth century:

> The greatest disaster that befell Islam was the usurpation of rule by Mu'awiya from Ali...This disaster was even worse than the tragedy of Karbala and the misfortunes that befell the Lord of Martyrs [upon whom be peace], and indeed it led to the tragedy of Karbala. The disaster that did not permit Islam to be correctly presented to the world was the greatest disaster of all.

[Khomeini: 1981. 200].

Such perspectives reflect a developed set of ideas but in the generations that immediately succeeded Hasan and Husayn there was considerable discussion on the significance of their sufferings and martyrdoms as well as on those of the succeeding Imams. Central to this process of reflection are the fifth and sixth of the Twelver Imamate, Muhammad al-Baqir [57/676 - 114/733] and Ja'far al-Sadiq [83/702/ - 148/765]. During the period of their respective leaderships the doctrines of the sinlessness of the Imam, his humanity, his involvement in the realm of existence after death, and the formation of a theodicy over the suffering of the Prophet's family were developed. Jaffri stresses the major role played here especially by the sixth Imam:

> In this setting the strategic task of the Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq was to save the basic ideal of Shi'ism from absorption by the emerging synthesis on the one hand, and to purify it from extremist and activist tendencies within itself on the other. Thus the circumstances in which the Imamate of Ja'far happened to fall afforded him the unique opportunity, denied to his father and grandfather, to firmly establish and explain the principles of legitimacy.

[Jaffri: 1979. 289].

Imam Husayn's death at Karbala provided a nodal point of reference for the clarifying of concepts and functions of suffering, intercession and as an eschatological prophetic figure.

Obviously, the death of Husayn in martyr like circumstances had a powerful moulding force upon subsequent forms of Shi'ism both under the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties. Two movements appeared in the immediate generation after

PAGE
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Other groupings from the Abbasid shelter over pro-Alid sympathisers, such as the *Rawandiyya* provided channels for the distinctive ideas flowing into the nascent *Ithna Ashari* Shi'ism. At this time the concepts of *bad'a* 'the intervention of new circumstances', ghayba 'withdrawal from the world' and *ra'ja* 'return or restitution' and *nass* 'designation of an Imam' were making their appearance amongst the radical movements, which were gradually to infiltrate mainstream 'Alid consciousness.

In the century following Husayn's death linkings of messianic fervour and ideology with Arab aristocratic aspirations to power came in three rebellions against the dominant regime. The Abbasid party drew upon the pro-Alid movements of 'Abd Allah ibn Mu'awiya and Muhammad and Ibrahim ibnay 'Abd Allah. Two further expressions of pro-Alid sentiment came in the movement of Zayd ibn Ali, and the more radical proto-Shi'a who fomented revolts as under Abu Mansur al-Ijili and Abu al-Khattab [Lewis: 1963 1. 134]. The successors of Ali through Husayn's son Abu Muhammad 'Ali ibn Husayn, known as *al-Sajjad* 'the prostrator' [38/658 – 94/712 or 95/713] did not involve themselves within a politico-revolutionary movement nor did they draw upon the juristic circles centred upon the Hijazi and Iraqi centres. Instead they proposed their own perspectives and traditions on the developing Muslim disciplines. It was to be the Imams al-Baqir and al-Sadiq who would create the foundations of what was to become Twelver Shi'ism.

Competing movements within nascent Shi'ism confronted pro-Alid and pro-Husaynid adherents. At the centre of the spectrum were figures such as al-Baqir and al-Sadiq consolidating their own followers with rival groups drawing upon elements of Husaynid Alid teachings to promote their particular political aspirations. A particular source of such competing ideologies and doctrines focused upon the nature of the Imamate, the death or martyrdom of such an Imam, and his continued existence after his death or disappearance. There occurred a meeting of ideas and events which shaped the self-awareness of the early Shi'a as prophetic eschatological figures, the actual events of Karbala, and understandings of the heroic martyr ideal mixed with notions of sinlessness and physical incorruptibility.

2.6.11 The Nature of the Martyr's death.

The meeting between the sole surviving son of Husayn, Ali al-Sajjad with either Ibn Ziyad, the Umayyad governor of Kufa or with Yazid himself in Damascus provides an insight into the evolution of Shi'a apologetic on the death of an Imam. 'Ali al-Sajjad is questioned:

Yazid: Did not God kill Ali ibn Husayn?
Ali: I have a brother who is also called Ali. The people killed him.
Yazid: Rather God killed him.
Ali: God receives the souls at the time of their death [S 39. 42].
Yazid: And whatever misfortune befalls you is the consequence of what your own hands have wrought [S 42. 30].
Ali: There befalls not any misfortune either in the earth or in your own persons, but it is recorded in a Book before. We bring it into being – surely that is easy for God – that you may not grieve over what is lost to you nor exult because of that which He has bestowed on you. And God loves not any conceited boaster [S 57. 22-23].

[al-Isfahani: 1368. 120].

This conflated account of the incident takes up two central themes for the Shi'a, the problem that suffering and disaster had fallen upon the Prophet's family and the sinlessness of the Imamate. When Yazid is shown as quoting Surah 42. 30,

> And whatever misfortune befalls you is the consequence of what your own hands have wrought.

as a proof text that Husayn's death is a punishment from God resulting from his rebellion against the caliph, the argument had to be rebutted. The reply attributed to al-Sajjad is the seedbed for subsequent Shi'a arguments countering the accusations.

His followers on this matter and the use of Surah 42 questioned al-Sadiq in relation to the *Ahl i. Bayt.*

> Do you consider what befell Ali and the members of his family to be the consequence of what their own hands have wrought, yet they are a Pure Household free of sin?

[Al-Sadiq: 1379. 383-384].

Al-Sadiq's response confirms that the sufferings of both the prophets and the Imams come from God not as retribution for sin but as a sign of divine favour for their sinlessness,

> The Messenger of God used to turn in repentance to God, the Mighty, the Sublime, and seek His forgiveness a hundred times in every day and night, without any sin. For God, the Mighty the Sublime, favours His friends by conferring misfortunes, in order to reward them for the tribulations, without there being any sin on their part.

These sufferings moreover by the Prophet's family are foretold and permitted by God as part of his purposes for humankind. Al-Baqir replied to a question from Hamran ibn A'yan,

Hamran: Tell me about the matter of the undertaking of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib and al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and their going forth into [battle] and their carrying out God's religion, and of what befell them of the tyrants' fighting them and defeating them, until they were slain or captured?
Al-Baqir: O Hamran, God, the Blessed and Exalted, had foreordained that for them, and had determined and decreed it, and enjoined it; then He put it into effect. So by a prior knowledge of this from the Messenger of God to them, 'Ali and al-Hasan and Husayn, God's blessing be upon them, rose up, and by a [certain] knowledge he who is silent among Us remained silent...if they had asked God to ward that off from them, and if they had beseeched God to seek the elimination of the dominion of the tyrants, then God would have responded to them and would have warded that off from them...What occurred to them of defeat, O Hamran, was not on account of a sin they committed, nor as a punishment for an act of disobedience by which they opposed God. Rather, [these things occurred to them] as 'stations' *li-manazil*, and as a mark of honour from God which He desired that they attain.

[al-Saffar in Majlisi: 1376/1956 – 1392/1972. II. 103].

A theodicy is being proposed here in that the death of Husayn, together with that of his father and brother, were the result of divine providence and will. Thus the deaths of the Imams are transformed into a set of higher meanings and purposes.

Nonetheless, the Shi'a were constantly perplexed by the paradox of the seeming failure of their position and cause whilst perceiving it to be the righteous and true purpose of God. In a lengthy exchange of questions and answers, one 'Abd Allah ibn al-Fadi ibn Babbah al-Hashimi asked al-Sadiq about this dilemma.

Al-Hashimi: O son of the Messenger of God, how did the day of Ashore become a day of calamity and grief, of anguish and lamentation, more than the day on which the Messenger of God passed away, and the day on which Fatima died, and the day on which the Prince of Believers ['Ali] was killed? And the day on which al-Hasan was murdered by poison?
Al-Sadiq: The day of al-Husayn's murder is a greater calamity than all the rest of those days, for the reason that the Companions of the Cloak, who were his most cherished creatures in God's eyes, were five. When the Prophet departed from them, here remained the Prince of Believers and Fatima and al-Hasan and al-Husayn, and they were a consolation and comfort for people. When Fatima passed away, there was a consolation and comfort for people in the persons of the Prince of Believers, al-

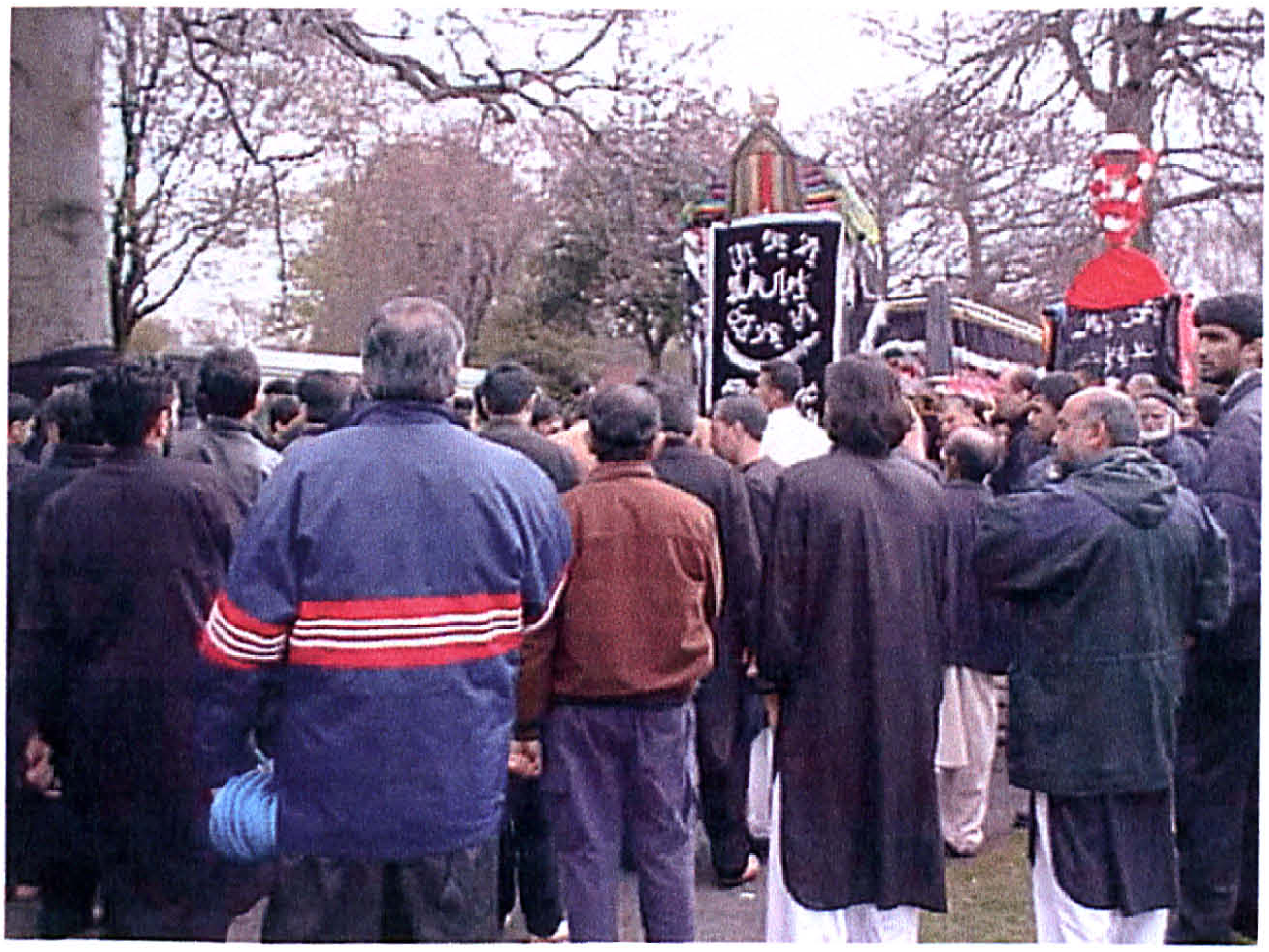
Hasan and al-Husayn; then when the Prince of Believers passed away from them, there was consolation and comfort for the people in al-Hasan and al-Husayn; then when al-Hasan passed way there was in al-Husayn a comfort and consolation for people. So when al-Husayn, may God whelm him in glory, was killed, not one of the Companions of the Cloak remained to be a consolation and comfort for people after him. Thus his passing was like the disappearance of all of them, just as his abiding had been like the continuation of them all. For that reason his day became the greatest day of calamity.
Al-Hashim: O son of the Messenger of God, then why was there no consolation and comfort for people in 'Ali ibn al-Husayn [al-Sajjad], similar to what they had had in their forefathers?
Al-Sadiq: Certainly 'Ali ibn al-Husayn was the 'Master of the Worshippers', and an Imam, and an Exemplary Witness for creatures after his deceased fathers. However, he did not meet the Messenger of God, nor did he hear him directly. His knowledge was a legacy from his father, from his grandfather, from the Prophet. The Prince of Believers and Fatima and al-Hasan and al-Husayn had been observed by the people with the Messenger of God in continuous and successive situations. When they looked at any one of them they used to remember his position with the Prophet and the statement of the Messenger of God to him and about him. So when they passed away, people missed seeing the cherished ones of God. Only in the loss of l-Husayn was there also the loss of them all, because he passed away last of all. For that reason his day became the greatest day of calamity.

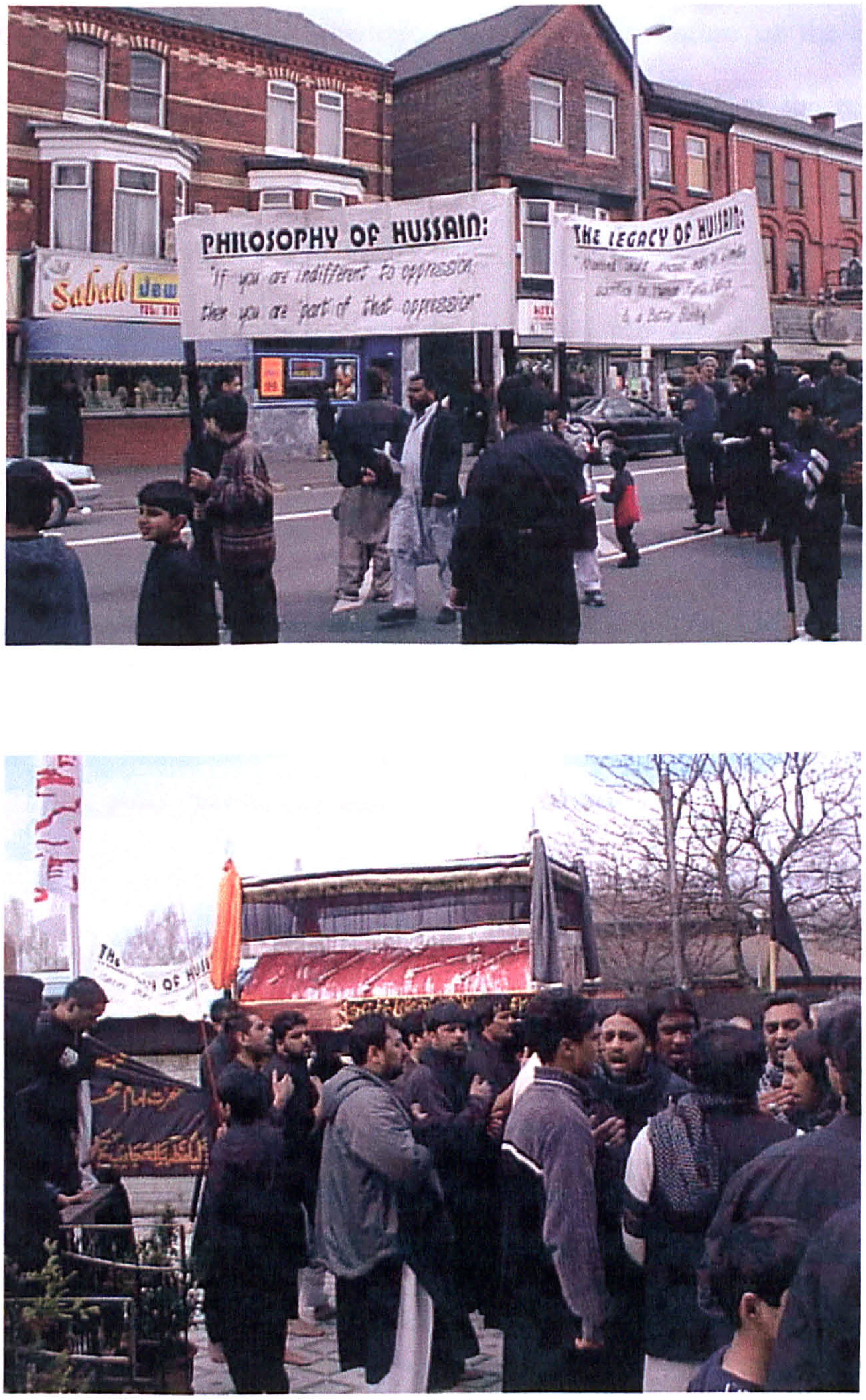
[Al-Sadiq: 1382. I., 25-227].

This account underlines how the fifth and sixth Imams both endorsed and fostered the observance of the day of 'Ashura in order to nurture unity amongst their followers and to further the rights of the Imamate's line. The day of 'Ashura was a day of trauma in contrast to the Umayyad use of the day as one of ' blessing' in the defeat of an usurper. Al-Sadiq saw as equally dangerous the radical *ghulat* views on the death of Husayn when they likened it to that of Jesus by affirming that he had not died at Karbala. Such approaches removed responsibility for the Imam's death from the Umayyad's as well as attacking the Imams who upheld the historical reality of Husayn's sufferings and death.

In the recitation of the events at Karbala many mythic traditions evolved in Shi'a piety. Ayoub relates accounts of Husayn's dreams in which the Prophet foretold his coming death and how bliss awaited him; of angelic longings to intervene in the conflict; of the chosen status of the sixty one men who were to die with Husayn; of Husayn's severed head speaking; and of the fates which awaited his opponents [1978: 120-139].

The following images record scenes from the 10th Ashura Procession by the community at the Ja'far Islamic Shi'a Centre, Moss lane East, Manchester on 8th April 2000. The '*alams, taziyeh,* and final *matam* at the *masjid* at the conclusion of the day. Such symbols used in the procession link the contemporary Shi'a community in Britain by analogies with the historical events of Karbala recreating the emotional sense of the loss of Husayn.




PHILOSOPHY OF HUSSAIN:
"If you are indifferent to oppression then you are part of that oppression"
THE LEGACY OF HUSSAIN:
Sabah

Figures 3.

As illustrated from these scenes there are parallels between Shi'a Ashura processions and Christian Passiontide/Good Friday traditions as well as between the deaths of Husayn and John the Baptist. The solemnity of the occasions of Ashura and Good

Friday and their emphasis upon the sacrificial nature of the deaths of Jesus of Nazareth and Husayn are conveyed in the symbolics of the respective traditions. Firstly, in relation to the hagiographic resemblance between John and Husayn [Al-Majlisi: 1376/1956 – 1392/1972. XLV. 201-219]. Whilst secondly, both Muslim and some Christian traditions amongst the Orthodox and Roman Catholic expressions affirm that saintly figures do not decay as a sign of purity and sinlessness. *Hadith* attributed to the Prophet include,

> ...Truly God has made our flesh inviolable [from decay] in the earth, so that it does not consume any of it.

which is expanded by al-Sadiq,

> There is no prophet nor any vicegerent of a prophet who remains in the earth more than three days; then his spirit and his bones and flesh are raised to heaven; yet [people] come to the sites of their traces and salutations reach them from afar, and [the prophets and their vicegerents the Imams] hear them before long at the sites of their traces.
>
> [Al-Saffar in Majlisi: 1376/1956. II. 443-444].

The account from al-Sadiq confirms the practice of visitation of the tombs of martyrs and saints and that they would respond to the intercessions of pilgrims, as they are alive in heaven.

The fates of the murderers of Husayn are underlined once more in an account from'Abd Allah al-Arrajani who travelled with al-Sadiq on *hajj* to Mecca. Passing a grim mountain near a village called 'Usfan, al-Sadiq indicated that beneath it lay a wadi of hell containing the murderers of Husayn where they were enduring terrible punishments. Al-Sadiq went on to tell al-Arrajani that every tyrant suffers with the enemies of Husayn along with the assassins of 'Ali and Fatima. Finally, al-Arrajani asks al-Sadiq,

> Tell me about al-Husayn, if he was disinterred, would they find anything in his grave? Sadiq: O ibn Bakr, what a tremendous question you have asked! Al-Husayn is with his father and mother, and his brother al-Hasan in the house of the Messenger of God; they are being kept alive *yuhayyuna* just as he is kept alive, and they are sustained *yurzaquna* like he is sustained. If he had been disinterred in his own day, he would have been found in his grave; as for today, he is now alive with his Lord and is sustained by Him.
>
> He is looking at his camp and he looks to the Throne to see when he will be ordered to carry it. He is suspended on the right hand side of the Throne, and is saying: 'O Lord! Grant me what you promised me!' He looks to see his visitors, their degrees and station with God, better that any of you knows his own son and what is in his saddlebag. He sees that one who weeps for him at his grave, and so he seeks God's forgiveness for him out of compassion, and asks his fathers ['Ali and Muhammad] to seek pardon for his sins...
>
> [al-Saddiq: 1382. I. 329].

Consequently, Husayn is seen as alive in heaven with his family where they intercede on behalf of their followers and in particular those who visit their graves. The power of visiting his grave would be lost totally unless he were to be sustained in the spiritual realm. He is also perceived to be sinless and that death occurred in the manner that it did not due to his sin but as part of a divinely preordained providence:

> The Imams...were from the beginning destined by God to drain the cup of suffering and martyrdom and to play a decisive role in human salvation and judgement. To a large extent, the intercessory prerogative of the *Imams* is dependent upon their patient endurance of privation, rejection and persecution.
>
> [Ayoub: 1987. 198].

The Shi'a coupled with belief in *ghayba* the idea of the return of the Imam or Mahdi as the final act of the eschatological drama in order to seek vengeance and to establish the justice of God.

> The *raj'a will* take place in order to show the believers the rule of the righteous Imam and to exact revenge from the enemies of the *ahl al-bayt.* The purpose of the *raj'a would* also require that a given number of non-believers and enemies of the *ahl al-bayt* also be returned to earth so that revenge may be exacted from them...The *raj'a,* then, can be interpreted as a prelude to the final resurrection. While the function of al-Mahdi is to commence the *zuhur* and launch the revolution in the final days, it is 'Ali and, more particularly, al-Husayn who will establish the Islamic rule after returning to life, following the *zuhur.*
>
> [Sachedina: 1981. 167-171].

Within Shi'a tradition there is a distinction made between natural death *mawt* and deliberate death at the hands of another *qatl.* Al-Baqir cites several *ayats* to substantiate his case to demonstrate these two experiences:

> Muhammad is no more than an apostle: other apostles have passed away before him. If he die or be slain, will you recant? He that recants will do no harm to God. But God will recompense the faithful.
> No one dies unless God wills. The term of every life is fixed.
>
> [S 3. 144].

> If you should die or be slain in the cause of God, His forgiveness *abd* His mercy would surely be better than all the riches they amass. If you should die or be slain, before God shall you all be gathered.
>
> [S 3. 158].

When asked about Surah 3. 185 Al-Baqir responds that:

> ...every believer has both a death by slaying and a death by dying, so that he who is slain is brought back to life until he dies, and he who dies is brought back to life until he is slain...

[al-Hilli: 1370. 17-29].

This eschatological perspective lies behind Shi'a understandings of Husayn's death as much as for the deaths of his father and brother. Some accounts describe the Prophet with 'Ali, or 'Ali alone returning to defeat their enemies, whilst others relate that it will be Husayn who will return to rule and pass judgement [al-Hilli: 1370. 17-18, 26-27]. Such beliefs stress the distinctive features of Shi'a eschatology compared to Sunni views as they stress the necessity of judgement upon the opponents of the Imams and give to Husayn the role of judge. This is either a parallel function to that of the *Qa'im* or a precursory one to that of the *Mahdi.* The final victory of the Imams and the restoration and vindication of the Prophet's family were to be fulfilled.

2.6.12 Understandings of the Martyr's death.

In opposing the extremist views of the deaths of 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn and the status of the Imams compelled the Shi'ite scholars to define the function and identity of the Imam as a suffering unjustly used person. To what end did all these difficulties come to them if they were in fact preordained through divine will? How could the apparent failure of the Prophet's family and line, if given so sanctioned a role as the Qur'an describes it, be so abused?

The opponents of the Husaynid 'Alids, as noted *supra* [see1.6.10], were clear in their understanding – Husayn's death was due to his disobedience and rebellion. Within the Shi'a streams themselves another understanding had evolved in describing the Imams as beyond suffering, even beyond death and thus in *ghayba* in this world, which would culminate in his return in the imminent future. This viewpoint remained popular in the century after Karbala nourished as it was by radical movements such as the *Kaysaniyya*. This opinion reappeared in Twelver groups and was to be eventually adopted officially after the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam into occultation.

Even with the significance of 'Ali, it is Husayn who in death provided a model for the later Imams both as exemplar martyr and as paradigm of intercession. From early times, the practice of visiting the tomb of Husayn seems to have become the focus of ritual mourning apart from the custom of *ziyara* to the Prophet's tomb [ibn Qawlawayhi: 1356. 321]. Al-Mufid describes the Shi'a belief on the continued existence of the Imams after their deaths:

> I say that the Messengers of God, the Exalted, are men, and His Prophets and the Imams among His successors are created and fashioned; sufferings affect them and enjoyments occur to them; their bodies grow with nourishment and diminish with the passage of time; death undoes them and dissolution overtakes them. The consensus of the people of God's unity [ie the Twelver school] agrees on this belief. Yet the ones affiliated with [the doctrine of] *tafwid* [delegation of authority from God to Muhammad to the Imam, to a pretender] and the classes of the *ghulat* have disagreed with us about it.
> As for their state after death, [we hold that] they are transferred from beneath the earth and then inhabit the Garden of Allah in their bodies and spirits. Thus, they exist in [paradise] alive and live a life of ease and comfort until the Day of Reckoning...
>
> [al-Mufid: 1371. 45].

The account goes to state that the Prophet and the Imams are fully aware of their community and its activities, rewarding the faithful with blessings. They will listen to their *Shi'at* as they pray at their tombs. Surah 3. 169 is taken as a foundation for such an understanding of their existence after death:

Never think that those who were slain in the cause of God are dead. They are alive, and well provided for by their Lord; pleased with His gifts and rejoicing that those they left behind, who have not yet joined them, have nothing to fear or to regret; rejoicing in God's grace and bounty. God will not deny the faithful reward.

[S 3. 169].

So, as *ghulat* groups will deny that the Imams pass through bodily death so al-Mufid affirms that they enjoy paradise and offer an intercessory role. There are parallels between the heavenly life of the Imams and that of Jesus of Nazareth following the ascension. The *ghulat* Shi'a speculated on this mode of life comparing it to the pre-earthly existence enjoyed by the prophets and Imams i.e. in the form of light [Moosa: 1987. 94] and called either *zill, ashbah* or *ajsad nuraniyya.* In his commentary upon Surah 51. 13,

The day when they the unbelievers will be tormented with the torment of fire...

Al-Sadiq states:

They will be fragmented in the Return [*al-Karra*] just as gold is refined so that everything may be returned to its likeness 'That is to say, to its true essence'.

[al-Sadiq: 1382. !. 257].

There is a tradition related by al-Baqir that Husayn did not experience physical pain at Karbala inspite of his extreme injuries. This is set in the context of a dream of Husayn's in which the Prophet told him:

> ...You will be martyred in Iraq, and a group of your companions shall be martyred with you. They will not experience the pain of the touch of iron and then he recited *O Fire, be a means of coolness and safety for Abraham* [S 21. 69] – the combat shall be a means of coolness and safety for you and for your companions.
>
> [al-Hilli: 1370. 50-51].

This does not agree with al-Mufid's statements that the Imams do enter suffering. This radical perspective that Husayn should be above human suffering has to be seen in the context of the extremist view that he was ascended before his death and a substitute provided in his place for the ordeal. Hanzala ibn As'ad al-Hamadani al-Shabami is mentioned as such a substitute whilst Husayn ascended to heaven [al-Saduq: 1377. II. 203]. Such views were condemned by the eighth Imam 'Ali ar-Rida [d. 203/818] as they were to be once more during the lesser *ghayba* of the twelfth Imam [260/874 – 329/941]. Clearly, such Shi'a groups with these opinions on Husayn's death were significant enough to draw condemnations from the Imams.

The comparisons between John the Baptist and Husayn became even more prominent in the later traditions when the cosmic meanings of Husayn's death and the gravity of judgement resting upon the *ummah* were developed. Al-Sadiq relates one report that at the death of Husayn, the angels around God cried out:

> O Lord, is Husayn, your bosom friend and the son of your Prophet, to be thus treated?!...So God raised the 'shadow' *zill* of the Qa'im, and He said: 'By this one shall I take vengeance for him from his oppressor...

[al-Tusi: quoted in Bihar XLV, 221].

Subsequent popular traditions portrayed Husayn as a tender young plant from the line of Fatima and Muhammad, who was destined to die and whose tragic death was to be culmination of human sinfulness since that of Cain's death at the hands of Abel [*Bihar* XLCV, 314-316]. Al-Sadiq's account ends with the description of the four thousand angels who remain at Husayn's graveside grieving until the day of resurrection.

'Ali ibn 'Isi al-Irbili,[Ibrahim Miyanaji ed] *Kashf al-Ghumma fi' Ma'rifat al-A'imma* Tabriz, 1381. These reports on the similarities between the two men describe how only for them did the sky weep and become blood red. Husayn is called *shahib Yahya ibn Zakariya* and his death is linked with those of other prophets; Radi al-Din ibn Ta'us *Kitab al-Luhuf 'ala Qatla al-Tufuf.* Sidon, 1347/1929, 10 relates that Husayn's death is like that of Abel killed by Cain whilst his revenge will be like that of Abel over Cain. Ibn Qawlawayhi *Kamil,* 75ff and 93: al-Baqir tells Hisham ibn 'Abd al-Malik that on the night that 'Ali was assassinated, blood was to be found under every stone, and that the same signs were seen for Joshua, Aaron, Simon, 'Ali and Husayn as well as when Jesus was ascended to heaven. An additional account relates that blood was discovered under the stones of the Temple in Jerusalem on Husayn's death. The details involving the Temple are intriguing as Muslim legend tells that the death of John the Baptist would only be avenged with the deaths of seventy thousand men [*Bihar* XLV, 299 from ibn Shahrashub Manaqib *Al Abi Talib*]; in the Shi'a tradition this is associated with the rising of the Mahdi who will kill twice as many to avenge Husayn's death, even extending this revenge to the descendants of his killers [*Bihar* XLV, 295-298].

All these features of Husayn's death in martyrdom, the divinely pre-ordained suffering for his family as a sign of their chosenness by God, his stand for truth before oppression and injustice, that he is alive in heaven and from there intercedes for his people, that he will avenge this suffering upon his enemies, and his role as precursor of the *Qa'im,* who will in turn rise and bring vengeance on Husayn's behalf, come together in a hadith recorded by Ibn Qawlawayhi. The setting is the Prophet's night journey to heaven during which God informs Muhammad that he will be tested for faithfulness by three experiences of suffering: hunger, confrontation with unbelievers, and the oppression and murder of his family. To each of these tests the Prophet agrees indicating his submission to God's decrees. Ultimately, the Prophet is shown the likeness of the *Qa'im* who will bring the final victory to Muhammad and his family. They are seen as judging and passing sentence upon their enemies for whom there are neither intermediaries nor intercessors.

> As for the third [it consists of] what your household and those after you shall meet with of killing. For your brother 'Ali, he shall meet with cursing and rebuke from your community, and reproaches, dispossession, repudiation, injustice, and finally murder...For your daughter [Fatima], she will suffer oppression and be dispossessed, her rights will be taken from her in anger at the one who gave them to her [the Prophet], and she will be beaten while she is pregnant. She and her home and her womenfolk will be forcibly entered without leave, then disgrace and humiliation will hit her; she will not find a preserver, and will have a miscarriage resulting from the beating, and she will die from that. She shall have two sons from your brother ['Ali], one of them [al-Hasan] will be slain treacherously, plundered and vilified; your community shall do that to him. As for her other son [al-Husayn], your community shall appeal to him for *jihad,* then they will slay him in captivity, and slay his sons and those with him of his household. They shall plunder his womenfolk; then they will beseech my help. The decree has elapsed from me concerning him for martyrdom, for him and for those with him. His slaying is to be a proof against whoever is between its two regions, the people of the heavens and the earths shall lament him, pitying him, as well as the angels who did not come to his assistance.
> Then shall a male child be extracted from [al-Husayn's] loins; by him shall I make you victorious. Verily his *shabah* [figure, person; or *shabah* likeness] is with me beneath the Throne.

[Ibn Qawlawayhi: 1356. 332-335].

The Shi'a respondents would affirm such perspectives as for example, respondent 1.4:

5. **Popular apologetic portrays the deaths of Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn as martyrdom and the result of jealousies eg for Husayn emerging from political usurpation by Muawiya and Yazid.**

This is where Shi'a people do face confrontation from those hostile to Islam – the example of 'Ali and Husayn is an inspiration to us as eg in the Iranian Revolution and with the Imam Khomeini and his leadership........

A Sunni respondent was more cautious whilst acknowledging the exemplary nature of Husayn's death. Respondent: 2.15

5. **Popular apologetic portrays the deaths of Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn as martyrdom and the result of jealousies eg for Husayn emerging from political usurpation by Muawiya and Yazid.**

   Do you share this understanding of their deaths? Does this explain to you the frequent sense of persecution by the Twelver Shi'a tradition?

This is both a point of some disunity amongst Muslims...we would not go as far as the Shi'a in their commemoration and understanding of Husayn's death....I think there is a sense of redemption which is a Christian notion but see it as 'Ali's death does too as an example of people giving their lives for true Islam.

Parallels between Husayn's death and those of earlier Biblical figures and that of Jesus of Nazareth began to be made from the late first Muslim century onwards. The extremist Shi'a developed comparisons between the suffering of Jesus and Husayn's fate whilst the mainstream Husaynid Alid groups linked him with John the Baptist as an exemplar of suffering and humiliation. Al-Baqir draws upon the precedent of Job who as a sinless prophet went through degradation and trails before receiving his reward [al-Sadiq: 1971. II. 399-400]. One reason for Job's trials according to al-Baqir was:

> Lest they impute *rububiyya* 'lordship' to him, if they perceived what God willed should be bestowed on him from the prodigious things of His blessings...

[al-Numan: 1370. 42].

Al-Sadiq perceived dangers in drawing too close a set of parallels between Husayn and Jesus. The radical Shi'a groups were prone to advocate the transfer of the role of a prophet from Muhammad to 'Ali, and thence to their descendants, the Imams. This was followed by claims that the Imams were divine with their sphere being the earthly realm in distinction to God in the heavenly realm. Al-Sadiq does compare Ismai'l and Husayn to order to substantiate the argument for the transfer of the Imamate from Hasan to Husayn forestalling the Zaydi and Hasanid claims to the leadership of the Shi'a community [al-Sadiq: 1971. 42].

In the understanding of al-Sadiq and his father, it was essential for the Imam to affirm his humanity as much as that of the prophets. They experience the greatest forms and weight of suffering beyond the rest of humankind. It is an intended suffering, undeserved and divinely permitted. It came from the hands of oppressive and morally evil men but Husayn is alive and responsive to his people the Shi'a. Thus he represents the offer of mercy and the inevitability of judgement.

The supporters of the Husaynid line saw the deaths of 'Ali and Husayn together with the sufferings of their family as an integral part of the final victory of the Imami perspective. Husayn would return heralding the manifestation of the *Qa'im* under whom the Prophet, 'Ali and Husayn would exact vengeance for the pain of their household. This promotion of a theology of judgement by the Imams contributed to the solidarity of the Alid movement in the face of repeated oppression by governmental regimes creating a 'cognitive dissonance' for the evolving Shi'a. This avoided the extremist millenarian ideologies of the *ghulat* movements but in relation to which the mainstream of Shi'ism had to define its goals. Thus from al-Sajjad onwards the spiritual place of Husayn as intercessor with his family, and their eschatological roles became central.

The final drama of the end in Shi'a perspectives has multiple conclusions. One involves the vindication of the dishonoured Fatimah and revenge upon her abusers. The Imams are portrayed as avenging their losses upon their enemies [Majlisi: 1384. LIII. 61-63]. These climaxes are invariably later developments in understanding the places of the Prophet, 'Ali and Husayn. On the Day of Resurrection, Husayn will witness the death of the Mahdi whose funeral obsequies he will be qualified to perform as another vicegerent [Majlisi: 1384. LIII. 56]. The Mahdi will be buried after whichj Husayn will reign in his stead for another three hundred years [Ayoub: 1978. 229].

This reign of Husayn will culminate win the utter defeat of Satan and his powers at the hands of 'Ali with his sword *dhu'l fiqar*. This final conflict against the very personification of evil will inevitably be fought near Karbala in a form of vindication and response to the earlier seeming defeat of the chosen family.

Chapter 2.

2.7 'Ali ibn Abu Talib: as Gate 'Bab' to the 'City of Knowledge'.

2.7.1 Origins and Etymologies of Sufism: Qur'anic sources.

Even during the Prophet's lifetime, some of his followers expressed a desire to experience a deeper and more intimate relationship with God than could be attained by dutifully maintaining the ritual prayer and responsibilities of moral conduct [*adab*]. During the three subsequent centuries a discipline of pious expression and self-examination evolved with forms of religious psychology into what is termed *Sufism.*

Several theological features are common to both Sunni and Shi'ite traditions, which will be discussed in detail *infra.* Amongst them is veneration for 'Ali ibn Abu Talib and the *Ahl i-Bayt* 'the Holy Family' of the Prophet; the symbol of the 'cloaking' of this family by Muhammad; and the *Nur Muhammadi* the 'light of Muhammad' transmitted by the 'chain' *silsilah* of tradition from one generation to the next.

Mystical tendencies were to be noted early in the development of nascent Shi'ism. Certainly the origins of the movement, which with the occultation of the twelfth Imam [260/874 Lesser Occultation; 329/941 Greater Occultation] became defined as Twelver Shi'ism have their roots in the issues of political succession and power within the Muslim community. The Imams themselves seem to have given up aspirations to such temporal power with Husayn's death and defeat at Karbala [61/680] and began to define themselves not so much as 'partisans of 'Ali' *Shi'at 'Ali* but more as 'friends of God' wali, through whom God may be known by humankind.

> Thus, two ontological plans of the Divine Being can be distinguished: the first is the plan of Essence, indescribable, inconceivable, beyond all intelligence, intuition, or thought; this is the plan of the Unknowable, of God in His vertiginous, unmanifested concealment. The other is the plan of Acts performed by the organs of God, the Imams, instruments capable of making known to the creatures what can be known of God; this is the plan of the manifest God, of the unknown aspiring to be known...Thus, knowledge of the reality of the Imam is the equivalent to the knowledge of that which can be known of God.'

[Moezzi: 1994. 45].

In Shi'a understanding the revelation of God has come for all in the Qur'an but its esoteric knowledge in this perspective is only found through the Imams, who are its guardians. Access to such knowledge rests upon initiation and thus participation in an elitist movement. It also involves prudence on the part of believers in stating one's beliefs openly.

Such mystical propensities would seem to have led Shi'is and Sunni Sufis to a common understanding, sharing as they do an orientation to the invisible, supernatural world. Indeed in focusing specifically upon Twelver Shi'a and the *Ahl i-Sunnat* 'Barelvi' traditions it would appear that such an eirenic relationship might flourish. The fruits of history however, where at certain times there has been fertile interplay between the traditions, has led to a contemporary pattern which can only be described as one of mutual recognition with questioning. In order to assess the inter-relationship between the evolving Shi'a expressions and key Sunni personalities and movements, which have moulded common aspects of spirituality with Imam 'Ali as a central figure will involve an examination of the historical growth of Sufism and its concepts both common and unique to either stream of Islam.

The etymological origins of the term *Sufi* are diverse and adherents enjoyed the process of contrasting and paralleling the variety of roots for the word: *safa* [purity] came into the discussion when the emphasis was upon the moral quality of the adept:

'he that is purified by love is pure, and he who is purified by the Beloved is a Sufi'. [Schimmel: 1975.16].

The traditions also include some of the Prophet's companions amongst their spiritual ancestors - hence another possible source for the term, *ahl as-suffa* the 'people of the bench', those poor and pious members of the Madinan community who lived near to the Prophet's Mosque and thus in their poverty modelled what became a mark of a subsequent spiritual ideal.

Amongst this first generation were several key figures such as Abu Dharr al-Ghifari [d. 21/656], who is seen in the tradition as the prototype *faqir*, the poor person who owns nothing and yet is utterly owned by God. A more significant man is Salman al-Farisi [d. circa 18-22/641-649] Persian born and adopted into the Prophet's family becoming thereby the example of spiritual incorporation, initiation and faithfulness to the prophet and his line. Through him the Arab tradition is linked with the Iranian expression, with his identity and spirituality becoming important in later Persian Sufism and Shi'a thought.

The debate on the term has been exemplified by the contributions of Merx [1893] and more recently by Ogen [1982. 33-48]. Classical sources describe the use of the term in the ninth century i.e. c. 121/816 with such groups forming in Baghdad as the capital of the Abbasid dynasty.

The more generally accepted origin however, for the term lies with the simple woollen garments [*sufi*] worn by these early adepts. In the pre-Islamic era Nestorian Christian ascetic tradition the use of wool was a noted symbol. During the actual Islamic period 'wool' was a designation in this Christian tradition of a monastic vocation. In addition, the wearing of wool was during the first generations of Islam a mark of the lowest and least affluent classes and thus of humility. Thus the earliest Sufi adherents would have adopted such garments and embraced their significance. Merx however, proposed an alternative meaning for the term. Arguing that *Sufi* could not have meant a 'wearer of wool' but a 'man of wool' he surmised that the term originated from the Greek *sophos,* 'wise' in the same way that the Greek *philosophos* 'philosopher' became Arabic *faylasuf.* Sufism emerged at approximately the same time, as Greek philosophical texts became available in Arabic translation providing Neo-Platonic ideas to influence its development. This process and affiliation continued until the patronage of philosophy came to an end with a change of caliphal ruler in 140/847 and the association with Greek thought was seen as unIslamic. In consequence the Greek origins of the term *Sufi* were less and less emphasised. In Ogen's opinion, *Sufi* could well have signified 'wearer of wool' coming from colloquial and thence into literary Arabic. As has been noted, a further etymology includes the term *saff* rank, implying that such people are a form of spiritual aristocracy amongst Muslims; safa 'purity; and from *saff* 'rank' or 'degree'. The evidence would indicate however, that the most probable formation of the term does emerge from the significance of 'wool' with a possible ironical reference to *sophos* as Neo-Platonic thought having some bearing and influence upon Sufism either directly or through Christian mysticism.

Thence *sufism* or *tasawwuf* has moved to represent both an Islamic science and the corporate spirituality and practices of people, who sought a more all-embracing experience of 'submission' *Islam* to God.

The resolution of such debates however, is less significant than the awareness that the terms *sufi* and *sufism* create many and complex layers of meanings within Islam as a whole. These include both world-denial, the tracing of close linkages with the Prophet himself and his family, together with a desire for spiritual attainment that will raise adherents to levels of spiritual intimacy with God.

Early Western scholars of Sufism affirmed that such a mystical tradition was derivative from other religious expressions and could not be seen as compatible with such a movement with its emphases on the transcendence of God with whom intimacy was little possible [Schimmel: 1974. 33-35]. Such a viewpoint stresses that in its formative period and expansion Islam encountered the mystical expressions of both Christianity and the Vedanta tradition within Hinduism. Such a theory has to be considered with seriousness although it can be tempered with regard to internal emphases within the text of the Qur'an and practice: firstly, the actual Qur'anic conception of a person's relationship with God is complex in nature. It describes both an intimacy [Surah 50. 16] and a distance [Surah .64. 1ff].

> We created man. We know the promptings of his soul, and are closer to him than his jugular vein.
>
> [S 50. 16].

> All that is in the heavens and the earth gives glory to God. His is the sovereignty, and His is the glory. He has power over all things.
>
> [S 64. 1].

Secondly, although Islam certainly developed in a religiously pluralist world, there is little basis to conclude that phenomena common to several religious traditions are therefore derivative.

Within the Qur'an the understanding of the relationship between humankind and God offers a study in contrasts. God the Creator is seen clearly as the Almighty, who sustains both the world and the universe at every moment.

> Yet your Lord is God, who in six days created the heavens and the earth and then ascended the throne, ordaining all things. None has power to intercede for you, except him who has received His sanction. Such is God, your Lord: therefore serve Him. Will you not take heed?
>
> To Him you shall all return: God's promise shall be fulfilled. He brings Creation into being and will then restore it, so He may justly recompense those who believed in Him and done good works.
>
> [S 10.3ff].

In this respect, men and women are servants – mortal, finite, vulnerable and tending to evil.

When your Lord said to the angels: 'I am placing on the earth one that shall rule as My deputy,' they replied: 'Will You put there one who will do evil and shed blood, when we have for so long sung Your praises and sanctified Your name?'

He said: 'I know what you know not.'

[S 2.30ff].

We created man from dry clay, from black moulded loam, and before him Satan from smokeless fire. Your Lord said to the angels: 'I am creating man from dry clay from black moulded loam. When I have fashioned him and breathed of My spirit into him, kneel down and prostrate yourselves before him.'

[S 15.26ff].

Being both lawgiver and judge, the servants of God stand before Him:

When the sky is rent asunder; when the stars scatter and the oceans merge together; when the graves are hurled about: each soul shall know what it has done and what it has failed to do.

[S 82.1].

Thus, such servants of God are encouraged to accept his purposes, not questioning its motive because humankind will be judged according to their faithfulness. If this relationship of Lord and servant [*rabb – abd'*] is broken then the serious sin of *shirk* can follow i.e. the substitution of another for God.

However, the inaccessibility of such a transcendent Lord is balanced and must be understood in the light of those Qur'anic verses that emphasise the immanence and abiding presence of God with his faithful people. God has breathed his own spirit into Adam at Creation:

When I have fashioned him and breathed of My spirit into him........

[S 15. 29].

Your Lord said to the angels: 'I am creating man from clay. When I have fashioned him and breathed My spirit into him, kneel down and prostrate yourselves before him.

[S 38.72].

This immanent God is also portrayed as closer to a person than his or her own jugular vein:

We created man. We know the promptings of his soul, and we are closer to him than his jugular vein.

[S 50.16].

This presence is all pervasive, both the East and the West belong to him:

'....and wherever you turn, there is God's face. Truly God is omnipresent, omniscient...'

[S 2.115].

A key aspect, as will be investigated, for Muslims is the recollection of God [*dikhr*]. The Qur'an calls believers to such a practice until it becomes second nature for them.

> Believers, be ever mindful of God: praise Him morning and evening. He and His angels bless you, so that He may lead you from darkness to the light. He is ever merciful to true believers.

[S 33. 41].

For Sufi adherents however, there is another important Qur'anic text which describes the creation of the primordial covenant between God and the souls of humankind in a point of time before the creation of the cosmos itself.

> 'And when your Lord took from the loins of the children of Adam their seed and made them testify about themselves [by saying] "Am I not your Lord?" They replied, "Yes, truly, we testify!'

[S 7.172].

This particular moment in which the union of God and the souls of men and women is affirmed, is known in Sufi writings as the day of '*Alast*', i.e. the day when God himself asked *Alastu bi-rabbikum'* 'Am I not your Lord?' The aim of every believing Muslim *sufi* therefore, is to regain that moment of closeness with the Creator of the Cosmos.

Such an idea of spiritual intimacy between believer and God is not a foreign concept to Islam. In the two traditional and key approaches of interpretation for the Qur'an, *tafsir* stresses the exoteric, obvious features of the text by philological, grammatical, historical and theological exegesis; *ta'wil* by contrast emphasises the esoteric or hidden significances of the text. It is this latter method that wins favour amongst Sufi and Shi'a Muslims.

Such early interpreters as Muqatil ibn Sulayman [d. 150/767] combined both literal and allegorical methods in their textual interpretation. A especial figure in this method however, is Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Shi'a Imam [80/699 or 83/702 or 86/705 - 148/765], who worked not only with the more formal scholarly approach but also examined the spiritual message of the text as well. This 'deeper' understanding of the text was seen to move in concert with the reader's own spiritual development. This pattern stressed that the text and the reader or commentator interacted as living entities. Thus, for later Sufis the very recitation of the text could create a spiritual fervour, as Sahl al-Tustari [d. 254/896] would testify for his experience.

The genesis of the first generation of Sufi movements was not exclusively spiritual in character. There was an intermingling of both aspirations for a more profound spirituality and a reaction to the changes in the *ummah* itself as the early Umayyad dynastic rule in the mid seventh century came to represent a worldly, materialist focus in contrast to the early simplicities. From Madhina, the capital moved to Damascus, a more wealthy and heterogeneous city; prosperity combined with military and political power contrasting vividly with that earlier pristine Arab context. At this point in the first of three traceable phases of the evolution of Sufism, three centres of such spiritual vitality emerged during the eighth and ninth centuries: in Iraq, Basra, Kufa, and Baghdad; Balk in Khurasan; and in Egypt.

2.7.2 First Phase of Sufi Movements.

The significance of key figures in the early phase of Sufi development lies in the subsequent moulding of ideas and beliefs for Sufi influenced Sunni movements such as the *Ahl io-Sunnat wa jama'at* and the Shi'a streams. Hasan Al-Basri [21/642 - 110/728] is both a key figure in discerning the evolution of Sufism in its first generation and as a significant juncture in the creation of *silsilah* lineages for Sufi teachers and subsequent *tariqah* orders as they sought to trace themselves to the Prophet via 'Ali ibn Abu Talib and his family. Born in Madhina and dying in Basra, al-Basri was famed for his strict piety and eloquence. At the heart of his spirituality was 'world renunciation' *al-dunya*, which he vividly contrasted with the permanence and wonder of the eternal world.

In a letter to the Umayyad Caliph Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz [r. 717 - 720] al-Basri saw this world as a poisonous snake, smooth to touch but deadly when roused. In this same letter he intimated that the creation of the world might in God's eyes have been an error. Such a perspective runs contrary to the Qur'anic perception which agrees with the Hebrew-Christian acceptance that in origin the creation was seen as good [Genesis 1.31]. Al-Basri however, represents a gnostic trend present in subsequent Sufi and in Ismai'li traditions particularly that disdains the material realm.

Whilst, some extant materials are available for studies of Hasan al-Basri for other early Sufi teachers such texts are few and of questionable value. Consequently, there is a contest between verifiable historical facts and the evolution of hagiographic pietist writings, which seek to exalt their subject. An example of this process is

Ibrahim ibn Adham [d.166/783], considered to have been a prince of the formerly Buddhist city of Balkh in Khurasan, who surrendered his position to devote himself to the ascetic life. There are clear parallels to the example of Siddartha Gautama and in the hagiographic traditions about ibn Adham there are references to his selflessness, willingness for humiliations, and utter trust in God. The readiness for physical abuse on ibn Adham's part gives rise to later understandings of ascetic practices and readiness for martyrdom *shahid* amongst Sufi adepts.

Asceticism is one theme in this first phase of the Sufi movements. Another is exemplified in one of the first and most important of female Sufis. Rabi'ah al-'Adawiyah [95/713 -185/ 801] was freed from slavery because of her noted piety. Her focus was less upon ascetic practice than on the desire to nurture a loving relationship with God. Whilst asceticism could lead to such experiences of union, al-'Adawiyah stressed that they could become ends in themselves.

Her perception of love was totally altruistic – neither fears of hell nor longing for paradise could divert her vision of, and love for God himself. This quality of 'love' *mahabbah* and mystical 'unity with God' *uns* are transmitted in the prayers and poetry attributed to her, which represent some of the first expressions of mystical experience offered and recorded in post-Prophetic Islam.

A poet and Sufi theorist, Dhu al-Nun al-Misri [180/796-245/859] offered both an aesthetic expression for the mystical tradition and the beginnings of a theoretical structure for later developments. No complete text of his writings has survived but his epigrams, prayers and poetry demonstrate his talent and style.

It is however, for his mystical insight and linguistic skills with which to analyse the 'stages' *maqamat* and 'states' *ahwal* of the mystical experience and life that al-Misri is noted as being able to create a code and structure. It is considered that with al-Misri begins the initial creation of a pattern and theory which distinguishes between spiritual 'gnosis' *ma'rifah* and the more orthodox and traditional way of discursive 'reasoning' *ilm*.

A major feature of al-Misri's thought is centred upon the paradox of divine love and human suffering. In his perspective, God pours out both his compassion and love upon the human being and also allows suffering and troubles to afflict him or her. God is at one and the same time both *al-muhyi* 'the giver of life' and the *al-mumit* 'the one who afflicts'. It is said according to legend that on his death al-Misri was found to have these words upon his forehead:

This is the beloved of God,
Who died in God's love.
This is the slain of God,
Who died by God's sword.

[al-Hujwiri: 1959 ed. 100].

The growing sophistication of Sufi terminology and theological expression in the divine-human relationship of love were amongst the indications of this maturing mystical tradition within Islam. In the ninth and tenth centuries Sufi thought centred on defining the content and aims of the mystical experience. Whilst al-'Adawiyah's thought provided a frame for discussion and a panorama by which to describe the goal there were new questions to answer. Contrasts were being mooted between the believer's 'disappearance' into God *fana* or annihilation; and an ongoing interdependent 'relationship' *baqa* between still distinguishable entities: God and the individual believer.

This debate crystallised around a number of Sufis whose experiences and ecstatic expressions confronted the by comparison more reserved Sufis and the traditional groups outside Sufism as such. Abu Yazid al-Bistami [d. 260/874] also known as Bayazid, lived in seclusion at Bistam in the province of Qumis. Said to have been initiated into mystical union thought by one Abu 'Ali al-Sindi, he is also said to have developed a link with al-Nun al-Misri. Many of the epigrammatic sayings and 'expressions' *shatahat* of al-Bistami have been preserved and their differences from earlier Sufi sayings are marked. They appear to describe a total identification with God on the part of the believer.

> As soon as I attained to His Unity I became a bird with a body of Oneness and wings of Everlastingness, and I continued flying in the air of Quality for ten years, until I reached an atmosphere a million times as large, and I flew on, until I found myself in the field of Eternity and I saw there the Tree of Oneness.....
>
> [as-Sarraj: 1914. 382].

These utterances would have perturbed and dismayed the orthodox as they displayed *shirk* – the association of another with the oneness of God *tauhid*. Shouts of *Subhani* 'Glory be to me!' and *Ma a'zama sha'ni* 'How great is my majesty!' spoke of the individual's incorporation into God.

These are features of al-Bistami's understandings of *fana* annihilation into God as a mystical theory. It is a state only attained after the most rigorous purgation of personal attributes in which nothing is spared – personality nor qualities nor attributes nor abilities. Al-Bistami compared the process to the blacksmith moulding the heated metal into a desired shape or utensil or to the snake sloughing off its old skin. This extremism of his statements was to lead later Sufis to respect al-Bistami highly as the proponent of the 'intoxicated' pathway *sukr* in distinction to the 'sober' way associated with another important Sufi figure, Abu al-Qasim al-Junayd [d. 297/910]. This differentiation of type was again to remain a significant division in subsequent Sufi historical developments and one of importance for devotion to 'Ali ibn 'Ali Talib as the *bab* 'gate' to spiritual knowledge.

Born in 244/857 at al-Tur, within the Iranian province of Fars, al-Hallaj was initiated into Sufism whilst still a teenager. Living in seclusion for some twenty years, al-Hallaj received training from a number of Sufi masters of the period – Sahl al-Tustari [203/818 - 283/896], 'Amr al-Makki [d.996], and al-Junayd [d.297/910]. The heart of al-Hallaj's message was a call to moral reform and to an experience of profound union with God the Beloved. One phrase stands out in all of al-Hallaj's poetry and prose writing with its exclamation of mystical unity and ecstasy:

Ana' al-Haqq!' 'I am the Truth!'
[Massignon: 1982. 112].

There is no doubt that al-Hallaj's statements about union with God in turn led him into imprisonment and eventual execution before the Abbasid authorities. Al-Hallaj's stress upon the mystical union crossed a key principle of other Sufi masters of the time. A developed mystic should never reveal to the uninitiated the mysteries that were beyond their understanding. The nature of the divine - human union could only be discussed with one's peers or not at all. Al-Hallaj represented a more populist concept and practice within mysticism and for his lack of restraint was rejected by such figures as al-Junayd, his former teacher and then by the political authorities as a threat to public order.

The particularly creative aspect of al-Hallaj's work lies in his use of the science of opposites. In *Kitab al-tawasin* [Massignon: 1913] al-Hallaj describes his two models in mystical understanding viz. *Iblis* the Devil and the Pharaoh. God condemned both yet paradoxically neither, al-Hallaj affirms, deviated from his path. In the Qur'an, it is affirmed that the devil as the senior of the angels and in fact the most dedicated monotheist was ordered by God to show obeisance to Adam. Refusing, despite God's warning of condemnation Adam forever chose, like al-Hallaj to be a sacrifice to love. Iblis, Pharaoh and al-Hallaj became transgressors of the law for a higher sufic purpose in the goal for love. The reason for their disobedience is the attainment of a love relationship with God personally, which becomes a richer, overarching and superior goal for the Sufi adept. In poetic expression al-Hallaj describes the obstinacy of Iblis as he refuses to do what he perceives God to be doing:

'I refused [to worship the form of Adam, at the Covenant]
because I wanted to proclaim you Holy;
But here Adam is You; and the only one who separates each of you is Iblis'.

[Massignon: 1982. 223]

According to tradition amongst al-Hallaj's last words were utterances such as:

'Kill me O my friends [*Uqtuluni ya thiqati*]
for to kill me is to make me live;
My life is in my death, and my death is in my life'

[Massignon: 1982. 285].

In considering the apprehension felt by the Sunni authorities at al-Hallaj's statements and teaching there is also the political climate of the period to be noted and understood. Al-Hallaj drew upon himself the ire of Shi'a circles as much as Sunni opposition with his adoption of extremist Shi'ite views. This threatened the delicate balance of power, freedom and influence that Shi'a groups held in the ninth and tenth centuries within the Sunni state parallel to the development of ideas around the Hidden or occulted Imam. Consequently, al-Hallaj could have found little support from Shi'a streams in the reign of Caliph Muqtadir [r. 907-932].

A second Sufi martyr offers another and subtler awareness of the issues of opposites. Ayn al-Qudat al-Hamadhani [d. 526 /1132]. An exceptionally able scholar and renowned for the quality of his Arabic and Persian literary style, al-Qudat was taught by an influential Sufi master, Ahmad al-Ghazali [d. 520/1128], the brother of the most renowned mystic-theologian Abu Hamid al-Ghazali [450/1058 - 505/1111].

In al-Qudat's thought the conjunction of opposites is mirrored in the concept of God itself. In examining the Muslim confession of faith there is a transition in the first tenet between opposite ideas. *La ilaha illa Allah* [there is no god but God] is the sphere of malevolent divine attributes, which create falseness and draw the soul of the spiritual seeker away from the truth. To move from *la ilaha* to *illa Allah* [but God] takes the Sufi seeker to stand at the threshold of God himself, which is guarded by Iblis, who as in al-Hallaj's idea is an example of devotion. By this paradox, al-Qudat describes the paradoxical tensions and opposites in God. He moves on to link Iblis with the Prophet stating that both are simply different aspects of the same reality of God. Iblis is a black light of staying whilst Muhammad is the white light of truth and gnosis. Both however, emerge from the same power of God with the Prophet as the white light of guidance and Iblis is its destructive force and fire. Al-Qudat stresses that both aspects of the paradox need to be experienced by the seeker if one is to enter true spiritual gnosis.

The tradition of the Science of Opposites attracted only a few Sufi adherents with its high degree of intellectual sophistication and its esotericism. In parallel to this more elitist vision, a tradition of manual texts began to emerge in the late ninth century, which were aimed at a wider range of faithful Muslims as training manuals to nurture the mystical experience.

The process of legitimisation of Sufi understandings in relation to orthodox Sunni Islam, which would nourish both later Sunni and Shi'a emphases, was to climax in the life and work of ibn Muhammad al-Ghazali [450/1058 – 505/1111]. Excelling as a student both in philosophy, jurisprudence and theology al-Ghazali's work represented a continuous dialogue between revelation and reason. Arab philosophy [Watt: 1985 ed. 85] had stressed the feasibility of truth being attained by reason without the aid of revelation. Such an outcome did not always concur with Qur'anic orthodoxy with dogmatic statements on the creation of the world *ex nihilo*, the resurrection of the dead, and God's knowledge of particulars as much as universals being questioned. Al-Ghazali spoke for the theme of revelation over against that of philosophical speculation without being anti-rationalist. If he debated against the philosophers [*Tahafut al-Falasifah*: 1958] 'The Incoherence of the Philosophers' he was not per se opposed to philosophical methods.

During a period of teaching in the Nizamiyah *madrasah* in Baghdad al-Ghazali experienced a personal crisis in 537/1095 after which he shifted his interest from speculative theories to that of religious experience itself. In an autobiographical work *Al-munqidh min al-dalal*[1] 'The Deliverer from Error' al-Ghazali expressed how in an extreme state of distress, he came to question religious ritual and law, as much as the possibility of reaching any sense of truth at all. He embraced a Sufi focus, abandoned is teaching career and sought a fresh solution for his questions. The success of this new orientation comes in his later work *Ihya 'ulum al-din* 'Reviving of the Religious Science' in which he proposes an integration of the inner spiritual life with the exterior observances of ritual and obedience. This was a major contribution to the integration and acceptance of the mystical tradition into Islam as a whole and especially within the Sunni traditions.

2.7.3 The Significance of Gnosis: the influence of ibn al-Arabi al-Hatimi al-Ta'i.

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn al-Arabi al-Hatimi al-Ta'i [560//1165 - 638/1240] born in Muslim Spain is honoured as *Al-Shaykh Al-Akhbar* 'doctor maximus' and as *Muhyi al-*

Din 'the revivifier of religion'. Ultimately he came to be known as 'Muhyi al-Din Ibn Arabi'. His early education was in the traditional Islamic sciences. There were however, additional moulding experiences from visionary experiences, which began during an illness in his youth. These visions came to have considerable authority for him [Chodkiewicz: 1993. 43]. Following travels that led him to several significant centres of Islamic learning, Ibn Arabi settled in Damascus in 621/1223 where he remained until his death seventeen years later.

The importance of Ibn Arabi for both Sunni and Shi'a traditions alike lies in his capacity as both an original thinker and as a synthesiser. In the latter role he drew together Sufi theory into a coherent whole with profound metaphysical foundations. The central concept of his work is *wahdat al-wudjud* 'unity of being', which can give rise to the thought that Ibn Arabi is proposing a monist system. Essentially however, Ibn Arabi is drawing upon the Ash'ari synthesis and carrying it through to its logical conclusion. The Ash'ari assertion is that God's total omnipotence and control over the creation implies that God is the sole true agent of being. Consequently, Ibn Arabi suggests that it is logical for God to be the only true existent.

Developing this idea, it is possible to assert that the divine essence, as totally transcendent, is unknowable to humankind. This is the *la ilaha* 'there is no God' of the *Shahadah*. This level of divine unity *ahadiyah* however, is not the only state in which the divine reality can be said to exist. 'Oneness' *wahidiyah* is marked as well by a plurality within which all the qualities of possible existents can be found. The final solution is found in a paradox. Whilst God's unity is categorical and transcendent; in the divine are to be found the qualities of all potential beings. Reality therefore in this understanding is tiered into a series of spiritual manifestations with ultimate reality the 'unknown God' *theos agnostos* from whom emerge the different planes of existence culminating in the God of Revelation, the 'but God' *illa Allah* of the declaration of faith. Because of the longing of this unknown God to escape from isolation, the creation occurs not as in traditional western theology *ex nihilo* from nothing. A Hadith saying referred to by Sufis is seen as expressing the divine will:

'I was a hidden treasure and I desired to be known, so I created the creation in order that I might be known'.

[Nasr: 1966. 138].

Thus the Creator shows himself in the plurality of the created order, which becomes I turn a mirror by which He sees himself. *Gnosis* for the Sufi is the pathway along which he or she travels from the illusion that they are independent beings distinct from God to the state where they perceive that the creation, and they themselves are identified with God's self-revealing.

Ibn Arabi became significant for Shi'a circles especially in Persia although it was well known from his *madhhab* that he was a Sunni of the Zahiri School. Amongst his works though is a treatise on the twelve Shi'ite Imams, which has remained popular amongst Shi'a people [Nasr: 1967 and Khalkhali 1322]. There is therefore, a clear relationship between the writings of Ibn Arabi and Shi'ism, which allowed the integration of his ideas into Shi'a gnosticism with some ease. The writings for example, of such Sufi Shi'ites as Sa'ad al-Dion al-Hamuyah, 'Abd al-Razzaq al-Kashani, Ibn Turkah, Sayyid Haydar Amuli, Ibn Abi Jumhur and other Shi'a gnostic orientated scholars of the period are suffused with the ideas of Ibn Arabi as well as the concepts of writers whose thought comes to a climax in the school of Mulla Sadra

2.7.4 The 'Perfect Man' *insan al-kamil*

In Sufi thought the created being in whom God is most fully conscious is the human being termed the 'Perfect Man'. Such a person *al-insan al-kamil* is believed to be alive in every generation. This person is the link between God and the created realm becoming the 'pole' *qutb* around which the cosmos as a whole exists.

> 'The Universal Man is the mirror in which the Divine Names and Qualities are fully reflected and through which the purpose of creation itself is fulfilled.'
>
> [Nasr: 1994. 138].

In Ibn Arabi's thought a transition occurs from the earlier mystical stress on the metaphor of love for the relationship between God and the creation. For Ibn Arabi and his emanationist emphasis the aim is not towards love but to wisdom. From his proposition that the Prophet pre-existed as divine Light the Shi'a could assert that the Imams are emanations of this light through Fatimah and 'Ali. Thus Ibn Arabi provided a major influence upon the flowering within Twelver Shi'ism that Muhammad is the 'perfect man' *al-insan al-kamil* and that 'Ali is the archetype of this perfect man.

Ibn Arabi would also influence the evolution of *Hikmat i-ilahi* 'divine wisdom' or 'theosophy' in the School of Isfahan. This school of thought and teaching' flourishing until the end of the seventeenth century, symbolises the convergence and harmonisation in Islam of three sources of spiritual knowledge: the revealed in the Qur'an and Hadith; rational analysis; and the mystical, ecstatic way of Sufism. Drawing from the twelfth century teacher Shihabu'd-Din Yahya Suhrawardi [549/1154 - 587/1191] who taught that to achieve genuine wisdom it was essential to develop both rationality and intuition. The latter required ascetical cleansing, mystical seeking and gnosis. The Isfahan School also drew upon the writings of Sayyid Haydar Amuli [d.771/1330] and Abi Ibn Jumhur [d. 903/1504] in merging Sufi ideas and practices with the esoteric understandings of Shi'ism.

Al-Amuli is one Shi'ite scholar who saw both the Prophet and his family as 'one soul' and 'one reality' and Muhammad and 'Ali as 'one person' [al-Amuli: n.d. MS 1349. No 5a in Moosa: 1988. 57]. Al-Amuli supports his thesis that 'Ali is pre-existent and at one with Muhammad by quoting several Hadiths:

I and 'Ali are of one Light.

[al-Sarraf: 1954. 148 & 193].

and

I was a Wali [vicegerent of God] while Adam was yet between the water and the clay.

[al-Sarraf: 1954. 189].

Amuli based his understanding that 'Ali was the archetype of the 'perfect man' upon an address attributed to 'Ali in which he says:

> I am the Face and Side of God, I am the Beginning and the End, I am the Dahir [outward] and the Batin [inward].
>
> [Al-Amuli: n.d . MS 1349. No 5a].

The most considerable figure in the school however, was to be Sadru'd-Din Muhammad ibn Ibrahim Shirazi, known as Mulla Sadra [979/1571 - 1050/1640]. With Sayyid Haydar Amuli, Mulla Sadra represents both the Shi'ite sympathy for classical Sufism and an ambivalence towards its outward practices. One of his most noted propositions was that Being exists in different degrees in different creatures. This contrasted with the dominant mystical conception that whilst all creatures are outwardly different, inwardly they are indistinguishable from Being itself and thus essential identity is weakened. Sadra thus created the concept that existence corresponds to light in the philosophy of 'Oriental Illumination' that there is a hierarchy of being without precise dividing lines. With this understanding the universe can be proposed to be in a state of constant 'becoming i.e. of upward progression from prime matter to Ibn Arabi's 'Perfect Man' , who is exemplified in both the Prophet and 'Ali. In studies of Mulla Sadra, Rahman saw him as both intensely rationalist and mystical in his thought [Rahman: 1975 & 1987]. Paralleling this theory, Mulla Sadra wrote on the mystical pathway with *al-Asfar al-Arba'ah* 'The Four Journeys' describing the four paths by which a person reaches extinction in God viz detachment from the physical world; attainment of sainthood; extinction in God; and finally, a return to this world to guide others. The attitudes shown towards Sunni

Sufis, modelled by Mulla Sadra and Haydar al-Amuli, have moulded those of the subsequent Shi'ite 'mystical' tradition. Although the theoretical aspects of Sufism have been accepted and tolerated, the name *sufi* is avoided and the term *irfan* is used in preference even to *tasawwuf* to avoid negative associations.

This *gnosis* is a move from an illusory awareness that creation is composed of plural beings to the insight that creation, with all its individual beings is, and always shall be united with God, as the source of existence. *Wahdat al-wujud* 'unity of being' bears considerable implications for all expressions of Sufi understandings of human freedom and identity, and ethical issues. From such a perspective nothing manifests itself within the universe outside the will of God. This is a key argument of Ibn Arabi and classical Islam. Moreover, in Ibn Arabi's thought the archetypes of all potential beings already exist in God. Once they do appear and are literal actualised beings, they function in complete agreement with their heavenly archetypes. Consequently to propose free will in the created material world is to suggest an illusion for actions in this realm are preordained in the other realm. Change is preordained by the archetype of a particular reality. If freedom does exist it only does so insofar as all the creation exists and shares in the liberty of God, with whom all is finally identified.

Ethical decisions must also be viewed in the context of the determining powers of the archetypes. In the created world, law *shari'ah,* decided what actions are permissible in accord with the revealed Will of God. From the perspective of God however, all actions can be seen to be good, as they are manifestations of the divine creativity and accord with the heavenly archetypes. Guilt and responsibility are relative as they belong in the realm of the illusory world. All will finally return to the One God, a proposition that eliminates the concept of a final judgement with either a reward or punishment for humankind.

2.7.5 *silsilah:* Sufi orders' genealogies traced to 'Ali.

The Sufi traditions possess a social dimension as much as mystical theory and psychology. Although many of the early generation of the Sufi teachers were individualists they also sought out 'companionship' *suhbah* for the way. Such interplay and relationships evolved into the master-disciple context, which involved not only attendance and visitation of the master by the disciple but residence around the master as well.

Political changes in the Islamic empires added to the gradual stabilisation of the Sufi institutions. By the mid-eleventh century the Seljuks had seized control of the Abbasid Caliphate from the Shi'a orientated Buyids. Firm in their Sunni stance the Seljuks adopted the structures of the *madrasahs* to reinforce Sunni othodoxy once more and supported financially the existing Sufi establishments giving them influence in their teaching and emphases as well. By the thirteenth century, several kinds of Sufi institution had developed with their own particular purposes. In the Arab regions the *ribat* represented a residence or training centre. *Khanqahs* were parallel centres in the Persian influenced area of Khurasan spreading eventually into Arab areas. The deeper training occurred in the *zawiyahs*, which were usually a focus for a single teaching *shaykh;* a *khalwah* is the residence or retreat for a cenobitic Sufi. The social community, which gathered around the shaykh, held together within the teacher's lifetime only then dispersing. However, from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries another transition occurred as Sufi groups began to perpetuate themselves even after the demise of the founding teacher. Spiritual authority was perceived as passing from master to pupil giving stability for the continuance and growth of the community. The duly appointed master of the centre became the perpetuator of the tradition and often an innovator in his own right.

Such stable social organisations as *tariqahs* 'ways' were located within a structure of *silsilah* 'chain' whereby the master traced his spiritual lineage backward through history to a significant figure and thence to the Prophet himself. A master would have been initiated into his *tariqah* by his own teacher if not initiated into more than one 'way' to add to the spiritual status within which he belonged and from which he drew. The two main *silsilah,* which subsequently sub-divided into a myriad of Sufi fraternities focused respectively upon Abu Qasim al-Junayd [d. 297/ 910] and Abu Yazid al-Bistami [d. 260/874].

Contemporary Western scholarship [Baldick: 1989. 75] has tended to scepticism on the authenticity of these *silsilah,* which refer to the origins of Islam, and the twelfth and thirteenth century Muslim jurists regarded them as unhistorical. The Sufi *shaykhs* however, needed these guarantees of validity partly because in Islam knowledge is understood to be transmitted from accepted teachers, and partly because the *Hadith* of the Prophet with their pedigrees of authentic and reliable transmitters provide a foundation of sound Muslim doctrine and practice. Thus growth of Sufi *silsilah* mirror the evolution of the *Hadith* transmission.

The actual literary structure of the *Hadith* literature has two parts within it. There is the text *matn* itself and a chain *isnad* of transmitters by whom the authenticity and thus the authority of the *Hadith* is guaranteed and preserved. In the same way the teaching and spiritual power or blessing *barakah* of the *shaykh* remains alive and active through his *silsilah.* These *silsilahs* provide the Sufi teacher with legitimacy traceable to the earliest authorities and thence either to 'Ali ibn Abu Talib or to Abu Bakr and the immediate circle of the Prophet.

From the tenth century, the Sufi masters had created lineages to the 'Followers' *tabi'un* of the Prophet, the generation of believers who succeeded that of Muhammad's immediate 'Companions', and who were perceived to possess a form of corporate authority. Only after these Followers were individuals named specifically. However, in the twelfth century the lists are carried back by named individuals to the Prophet himself by his first successors in the *khalifat.* This is influenced by the parallel rise of devotion to the Prophet's person and family in the same period. The 'chain' is progressed through 'Ali ibn Abu Talib or Abu Bakr, who are respected by Sunni expressions as *khilafat.* It is not surprising that 'Ali should be thus respected considering his significance within the family of the Prophet and his benefiting from the veneration accorded to Muhammad.

This devotion has continued into the contemporary Sufi influenced Sunni perspectives as exemplified by responses from the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* representatives' statements:

Respondent 1.7

4. **There is a high estimate of Imam 'Ali within contrasting traditions of Islam....eg: ''Ali is the Gate to the City of Knowledge'.**

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The *shaykh* now became both a teacher and a means of spiritual power and mediation on behalf of the disciple with God. To the *shaykhs* of the most significant Sufi movements therefore, qualities beyond the mere human were attributed, which raised them above the level of their followers and the mass of the faithful. It was the spread of Ibn Arabi's concept of the 'Perfect Man' and its elaboration by his disciples, especially 'Abd al-Karim ibn Ibrahim al-Jili [767/1365 -820/1417], which provided the means to explain this central role of the saint - *shaykh*. Many of these *shaykhs* were held by their followers to be the *qutb* 'pole' or 'axis' around which the cosmos revolves, the Perfect Human Being in which the divine creative imagination reveals itself in the world [Corbin: 1969. 131-133; 211].

Ibn Arabi ties the concept of the *qutb* with a hierarchy of heavenly beings [Ibn Arabi: 1876. 2.9]. Al-Hujwiri [1911 ed: 214] describes them as the officers of the heavenly court, composing some three hundred *akhyar* 'excellent ones'; forty *abdhal* 'substitutes'; seven *abrar* 'pious devoted ones'; four *awtad* 'pillars'; three *nuqaba* 'leaders/overseers' and one *qutb* 'pole' who is also known as *ghawth* 'successor'. The hierarchy portrayed by Ibn Arabi is somewhat different as the *qutb* is associated with two *a'immah* 'guides'; four *awtab*' seven *abdal;* twelve *nuqaba;* and eight *nujaba* 'nobles'. However the hierarchy is structured it is the means for spiritual power to maintain the order and existence of the cosmos.

The *qutb* is considered the epitome of sanctity over the saints *awliya*. The *qutb* also has healing powers which leads to the additional title of *gawth* 'refuge of those who seek help' [ibn Asad al-Yafii: 1911. 275-276, 336-337., 338-339 & al-Hujwiri: 1911 ed. 214]. As such the *qutb* can be proposed to hold a similar position within Sufism as the *Imam* does in Shi'a understanding [al-Shaibi: 1991. 75]. Thus in Shi'ite perception the Imam, and specifically Imam 'Ali is seen, as indeed Ibn Arabi perceives him, to be the Logos [Affifi: 1964. 89-92]. There is evidence in *Nahj ul Balagha* that 'Ali used the term in relation to himself as the *qutb* combined with the offices of caliph and Imam, claiming that he rather than the first caliph Abu Bakr was the rightful claimant to the office. Thus in Sermon 3: *ash-Shiqshiqiyyah,* he declares:

> Beware! By Allah the son of Abu Quhafah [Abu Bakr] dressed himself with it [the caliphate] and he certainly knows that my position in relation to it was the same as the position of the axis in relation to the hand-mill. The flood water flows down from me and the bird cannot fly up to me. I put a curtain against the caliphate and kept myself detached from it.
>
> [Nahj ul Balagha: 1984 ed. 105].

So Imam 'Ali becomes the unique head of the unseen realm for Sufis and Shi'a, excepting the prophethood which is reserved exclusively for Muhammad. 'Ali also becomes *wali* to God and presides over the *awliya.* It was with the extremist *ghulat* expressions of Shi'ism in Syria and Iraq during the second century AH that 'Ali became a priest-god figure or a challenge to prophethood after Muhammad [Friedlander: 1907. 55].

Below the *qutb* in this spiritual hierarchy are, as has been described *supra* the 'overseers', 'supporters', 'righteous', 'substitutes' and 'the good '. This hierarchy also includes two Imams who stand to either side of the *qutb* as his lieutenants.

In the Shi'a tradition, the forty *abdal* were Shi'ites, or supporters of 'Ali in the time of Caliph Umar Ibn al-Khattab, standing both with him and the subsequent historical

Imams. In Ja'far al-Sadiq's perspective the *abdal* were the 'messengers of the Imam' [Ibn Arabi: 1876 ed. 2.9] and as such form a significant part of the Shi'a spiritual tradition being constantly with the Imam. They function as guardians of the created realm, healers of the sick and helpers of the wronged and oppressed [Ibn Arabi: 1968ed. 1. 418-419].

The perfected *shaykhs* were seen as objects of veneration both during their lives and after their demise. With the general acceptance that they have the power of performing miracles, it is acknowledged that Satan can counterfeit their spiritual power in the manner that the miracles ascribed to Prophets cannot be seen. After death such spiritual influence is not diminished. Quite the opposite can occur, as the tombs of significant *awliya* became centres of pilgrimage.

2.7.7 Mysticism, Martyrdom and Marginalisation.

Shi'ism is marked by martyrdom with the two grandsons of the Prophet representing parallel themes in Shi'ism: reflective acquiescence and assertive activism. The first expression is clear enough in its appeal for the Shi'a: belief in a special tie with God through the Prophet and his lineage seems to put them at the very centre of the spiritual and real universe. At the same time however, they are at the edge and oppressed. To cope with this paradox, Shi'ism developed a strategy of perceiving outward appearances as unreal *zahir* whilst true reality was available through secret knowledge *batin,* which the truly initiated could recognise behind the mask of materiality. Thus the true believers may not rule the political world but they do rule the world that is worth ruling - the unseen realms.

Hence the Shi'a evolved a complex system of spiritual relationships and ranking, which rested upon three kinds of relationship:

Blood kinship/lineage through 'Ali and his family.
Spiritual initiation.
Transmission of secret knowledge *nass*.

The *gnosis* shared was defended by *taqiyya* - 'dissimulation' ie those who know the truth need not divulge it to the unworthy, just as Muhammad only gave *nass* to 'Ali. Such a process, in many other examples [from Masonic Lodges to Scientology] states that the actual knowledge is less important than the way its possession unites those who share it into an oppositional community, with internal ranking according to the degree of knowledge held.

Within Shi'ism, this knowledge was to be expressed in a rich tradition of poetry, pilgrimages to the shrines of the invariably martyred Imams, and in ritual expressions focused for example on the death of Imam Husayn at Karbala. This festival of Ashura in the month of Muharram, is the Shi'a parallel of the traditional Catholic Christian Good Friday with its symbols of suffering and ritual re-enactment of the events surrounding Jesus' last days. The re-enactment of Karbala with weeping and self-flagellation is not only a ritual commemoration of the event but also a mystical identification with the martyrs. Like Husayn, the believers must bravely suffer oppression and injustice to redeem the unjust community that has rejected them. In agonising and grieving over the death of 'Ali and then Husayn, they believe that their humiliation and mourning will bring in the reign of justice - God does not abandon his favoured ones.

The two sides of Shi'ism are reflected at Muharram - one quietistic, turning away from the mundane and towards the spiritual, recalling the anguish of the martyrs - salvation will come tomorrow. The other is activist, prepared to rise in order to initiate the Final Days when those who have caused the innocent to suffer and denied equality to the people of 'Ali will receive their reward. It is this dialectic of the mystical and the activist that propels the Shi'ite movement through history.

2.7.8 The Sufi Search.

As parallel responses therefore, to the breakdown of the original Muslim *ummah* Shi'a and Sufi sought to address and answer the perceived dilemma. For the Shi'a it would be through adherence to the family of the Prophet and 'Ali, hence the 'Alid approach. Sunni Muslims rejected this expression but found themselves under the suzerainty of an increasingly centralising and tyrannical secular state. In this situation, which was becoming steadily distant from the earliest ideals of the community, devout believers focused themselves on study of the Prophet's life and *hadith.* Thus, as Massignon points out, by the early eighth century some of the first Hadith transmitters had become the earliest Sufi teachers [Massignon: 1954].

The first *Sufis* were' like the Imams of the Shi'a, *walis* or 'friends of God'. They were believed to be those destined to renew the faith of Islam and to combat the evils of the times. As has been noted already, one of the first and most influential of this generation was Hasan al-Basri who, deeply troubled and moved by the darkness of the times and as he perceived it, the distance between God and humankind, devoted himself to asceticism and adherence to the *Shari'ah*. He and his associates were known as those who 'constantly weep' reflecting the discontentment amongst the spiritual elite at the condition of the times. Their message offered little in the prospect of change so held minimal appeal to the mass of the people.

A contrasting and more popular approach was offered by Rabi'ya ibn Adawiyya with her message of passionate spiritual love. She is alleged to have wandered the streets of Basra carrying a pitcher of water in one hand and a burning torch in the other. Her aim, she said, was to burn paradise and to douse hell so that men and women would no longer worship God out of selfish interest for their eternity but simply out of pure love for God [Smith: 1984.]. She taught that self-immolation into divine love was the only fitting end for the devout believer for once enfolded into God she felt that she had ceased to exist and to have become one with Him. Rabi'a was not the only mystic to have employed the imagery of love. The earlier sixth Imam of the Shi'a, Ja'far al-Sadiq had also used such concepts [Schimmel: 1985]. Rabi'a's metaphor of God as the Beloved became the dominant trope for subsequent Sufi theory and practice as the merit of self-negation through love became dominant over the earlier stress on grief. Rather than mourning over present distress and seeking the apocalypse, Sufis would henceforth search for the 'inner awareness' *marifa* of God's face, which was veiled behind earthly appearances. This would not be achieved by scholarship but rather by strict discipline and control of the emotions with detachment from the rest of humanity's preoccupations. In this there would be for Sufi adherents within the

Indian sub-continent the influence of the Bhakti traditions within the Hindu streams [Baldick: 1989]. Jalaluddin Rumi advised:

> 'Whatever seems profitable, flee from it, drink poison and spill the water of life, condemn whatever praises you, lend to paupers your wealth and profits! Quit your sect and be a subject of aversion, cast away your name and fame and seek disgrace'.

[Rumi: 1975. 90-91].

By the twelfth century, this individual pursuit of enlightenment had become well institutionalised in corporate expressions. *Tariqas* [lodges - or pathways] had been founded where masters *murshids* or *pirs* were surrounded by their disciples *murids*. The pupils were attached to their teacher who represented God upon earth in a way that paralleled in a smaller context the tie of the Shi'a to their Imam of the time.

2.7.9 The Cosmic Order.

The personal relationship between the Sufi *pir* and the disciple *murid* was to be developed into a complex hierarchy of spiritual guide and adherents. Disciples would gather around s teacher in a *khaniqa* related to the Prophet's cloak *khirrqah,* which he had thrown around 'Ali and his wife, and family, to create a lodge or in time an order. After the death of the *pir* or *Shaykh,* the tomb of the saintly founder would become a shrine and scene of pilgrimage for a devotional cult. Each new order would seek to legitimate itself by tracing a spiritual lineage *silsilah* through to the first generation of Islam and thence to the Prophet himself. Thus the genealogy would be linked through Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq and Hasan al-Basri or the ninth century mystic al-Junayd to 'Ali or to Abu Bakr. Thus the original charismatic tenor of the *pir* was continued and validated, and a link was established to the first charismatic Muslim community.

Unlike the Shi'a tradition and the hereditary Imamate, anyone amongst the Sufi Sunni streams could become a *pir* regardless of family line and status. *Pirs* also stood in contrast to the orthodox *ulama,* who were evolving into caste-like groups with a monopoly of the religious teaching and held state appointed positions at the mosque. Sufis invariably offered alternative structures to the state. Their power it might be claimed emanated from much superior sources to that of the *ulama* - through their teachers and thus the spiritual lineage to the Prophet and thence to God. The person of Muhammad was however, in this perspective more even than a Prophet; he was also the 'Perfect Man' *al-insan al-kamil,* sent by God to be the *Qutb*, the pivot of the universe who brings the world to perfection. The Twelver Shi'a affirmed that each generation would have an Imam, even if eventually hidden, so the Sufis held that a *Qutb* would exist even if he too would only be visible to the elite and not necessarily of the 'Alid lineage.

Thus sacred power was expressed in the organised communities of the Sufi orders with a hierarchy of saints in whom was vested the real, eternal power in contrast to the transient power of the dynasties. These as the centuries passed were seen to be such - transient and passing. For the Sufis there was a true spiritual caliph just as for the Shi'a there was a Hidden Imam. Hodgson expresses it:

> 'There might no longer be a Caliph with power in the ordinary political sense. But there remained a true spiritual Caliph, the immediate representative of God, who bore a far more basic sway than any outward Caliph'.

[Hodgson: 1974. Vol 2. 230].

2.7.10 Shi'ism and Sufism.

The relationship between the Shi'a traditions and the Sufi expressions of Islam is complicated by the fact that Islam has both an exoteric [*zahir*] and an esoteric [*batin*] dimension, which show the vertical aspect of the faith with the broad horizontal lines expressed in the respective Shi'a and Sunni emphases. The esoteric dimension in Sunnism is almost wholly expressed in the Sufi orders and movements whereas Shi'ism was suffused with this esoteric theme from the beginning of its history. From one perspective it was the Shi'a tradition which infiltrated the Sunni with mysticism. Ibn Khaldun wrote:

> 'The Sufis thus became saturated with Shi'a theories. Shi'a theories entered so deeply into their religious ideas that they based their own practice of using a cloak *khirrqah* on the fact that 'Ali clothed al-Hasan al-Basri in such a cloak and caused him to agree solemnly that he would adhere to the mystic path. [The tradition thus inaugurated by 'Ali] was continued according to the Sufis, through al-Junayd, one of the Sufi *Shaykhs'*.
>
> [Ibn Khaldun: 1958: 187]

Certainly from within the Shi'a tradition there are perspectives that Sufism originates with the Shi'i, which means the esoteric *asrar* aspect of the Prophet's teachings. However, from their later historical developments then neither Sufism nor Shi'ism derive from one another. Both derive from the life and *hadith* of the Prophet, and the Qur'an. If though we are discussing Muslim esotericism as such then the two streams are interlinked. The Shi'a Imams play a key role in Sufism but not as specifically Shi'ite Imams as they were to be seen in the later development of the Faith as a whole.

During the early period of Islam in some situations, Sunni and Shi'a expressions are interchangeable with the defining of the respective positions only coming in the fourth/tenth centuries [Hodgson: 1955. 4; and Taylor: 1967. 202].

Shaibi [1991. 56ff] considers the Sufi movement to resemble the Shi'ite *ghulat* extremist movements in all essentials claiming that the first Sufis were Persian in origin and from the same or similar professions [Shaibi: 1991. 78 n1]. An example of a temporary period of rapprochement between Shi'a and Sufi proponents and ideas came in the Abbasid era. The Abbasid revolution [132/750 - 334/945] began initially as a Shi'a inspired venture, which swiftly took an anti-Shi'a turning. Once in power the Abbasid line realised that Shi'a supporters would not accept their claims to 'Alid legitimacy. However, during the civil war between the two sons of the fifth Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid [147/764 - 194/809], al-Amin [193/809 - 198/813] and al-Ma'mun [198/813 - 218/833] Shi'a fortunes rose when al-Ma'mun appointed the eighth Shi'a Imam 'Ali al-Rida [148/765 - 203/818] as his heir apparent. This coincided with the rise of Sufi influences and tendencies amongst the Mu'tazilite theologians centred in Baghdad [Sobieroj: 1999.68-69]. Living in the latter stages of the Abbasid era, al-Junayd [d. 297/910] harmonised Sufi gnostic emphases with the emerging Shi'a focus on the religious as opposed to the political centrality of the 'Alid line. For al-Junayd, 'Ali occupied a distinctive place in Sufi ideology as possessing 'divine knowledge' *al-'ilmu l-laduni* [Al-Sarraj: 1914 ed. 129]. Given the disputatious nature of the times al-Junayd is content with allusion in such matters. Writing later Abu Bakr al-Kalabadhi [d.390/1000] in *Kitab al-Ta'arruf li mahdab ahl at-tasuwwuf* 'The Doctrine of the Sufis', saw 'Ali and his five successors in the Imamate as the builders of Sufism [al-Kalabadhi; 1933ed. 11]. Al-Hujwiri [d.circa 465/1074] affirmed that:

> "Ali was our shaykh in regard to principles and in regard to the endurance of affliction'.
>
> [Al-Hujwiri: 1936ed.774].

Farid ad-Din al-Attar [d circa 627/1229] endorsed Al-Hujwiri adding that 'Ali, according to al-Junayd's estimation was the equivalent of the metaphysical figure of al-Khadir. Abu Nu'aym [d. 430/1039] quoted traditions attributed to the Prophet, 'Ali, and Husayn confirming thereby that the Shi'ites were the real Sufis [Abu Nu'aym: 1932-39. Vol 1 86-87]. In recording the dreams of Abu Bakr al-Kattani [d. 322/934] Al-Kalabadhi gave a prominence to 'Ali over the status of Abu Bakr [Al-Kalabadhi: 1933 ed. 119] which was indicative of awareness of Shi'a claims for the 'Alid lineage to hold the *kh'Alifat.* The three jurists Al-Sarraj [d. 378/988], Al-Makki [d. 380 or 390/990 or 1000] and Abu Nu'aym [d. 430/1039] all cite 'Ali's words in such a way that show al-Sharifs al-Hadi's role [d. 406/1016] in editing *Nahj ul Balagha*, which as al-Radi affirms [al-Radi: 1936. 167-168], was one of collecting and arranging the extant materials and completing the task after the deaths of al-Kalabadhi, al-Sarraj and al-Makki respectively. Additionally, the Sufi teacher al-Suhrawardi [d. 632/1235] saw the 'Alid line as one of God's sacred households [al-Suhrawardi; 1939. 75]. Al-Dusuqi [d. 676/1269] saw 'Ali as being the equal of the prophets [al-Sharani: 1925. Vol 1. 157]. Further examples of Sufi considerations of 'Ali and his sons come if controversially, from al-Hallaj, who claimed to have been the gateway to the Shi'a Madhi [Al-Tusi: 1905. 262], and al-Hujwiri, who mentions the close links between Ja'far al-Sadiq the sixth Shi'a Imam and Dawud al-Ta'i [d.

165/781/2] [al-Hujwiri. 1936. 95]. Whilst Ahmed al-Rifa'i was seen as being directly following the Twelve Imams, indicating acceptance of the Shi'a *Madhiyya*. Having noted already Ibn Khaldun's observation on the influence of Shi'ism upon Sufism [ibn Khaldun; nd. 323], in this case Shaibi asserts that some Shi'a from Karbala were encouraged to migrate to North Africa to make use of the *al-Mahdiyya* as a profession [Shai'bi: 1991. 58].

Such ties encouraged Shi'ite apologetic to go further and to describe relationships between Sufi teachers and individual Imams. For example the claim is made that Ibrahim ibn Adham [d. 166/783] was initiated into the 'pathway' by Muhammad al-Baqir the fifth Imam [57/676 - 117/735] [Al-Qadi Nurullah: nd. 251], and that Bishr al-Hafi [d. 227/842] repented with the guidance of Musa al-Kazim, the seventh Imam [128/745 - 183/799] [Al-Qadi Nurullah: nd. Vol 2. 83]. Al-Bistami d. 260/874] was seen as one of the sixth Imam, al-Sadiq's students [d. 148/765] and the water carrier of his house [Al-Qadi Nurullah: nd. 251]. Such ties are more idealised than tenable given the dating of the individuals' lives that are concerned. It was said however, that Ibn Jumhur al-Ahas'i [d. 901/1496] had collected such traditions [Al-Ahas'i: 1911ed] and that the Sufi orders linked themselves to al-Junayd, who in turn depended upon al-Ma'ruf, the disciple of 'Ali ar-Rida, the eighth Shi'a Imam [148/765 - 203/818].

Certainly, by the fifth/eleventh centuries Sufism had become a major means of religious expression for the great mass of the Muslim peoples. The growth of Sufi Orders had commenced with Shi'ism losing ground under the zealously Sunni rule of the Seljuqs [447/1040 – 604/1194]. It may be argued that the spiritual vacuum left by the Shi'a at this time was filled by the Sufi emphasis. The disorder of the times also however, may also have contributed as Muslims began to question if a righteous order could ever be established on earth. One significant development however, was the support given by the Caliph an-Nasir [576/1180-622/1225] to the formation of brotherhoods with chivalric objectives. Termed *futuwwa* 'young men' they were modelled upon 'Ali as the ideal of Islamic bravery and chivalry

'There is no youth *fata* braver than 'Ali.'

[Momem: 1985. 90].

This was a typically close link between mystical hope with pro-'Alid, if not explicitly Shi'ite theological commitment in this period and into the subsequent Mongol era. However, such paramilitary associations did contribute to a gradual 'Shi'itisation' of the masses and a consciousness amongst the Sunni in general [Halm: 1991. 76].

The Mongol invasions beginning in 617/1220 were to have a considerable impact on Muslim civilisation and especially on Sunni opinion of that time. The Shi'a however, found themselves treated on equal footing with the Sunni majority. The demise of the Abbasid Caliphate allowed a parallel easing of polemical tensions between Sunni and Shi'a *ulama* and whilst debate continued between scholars, it was marked by respect and tolerance. Representative of this time and ethos is Sayyad Haydar Amuli when in his text *Jami' al-Asrar* 'The Compilation of Mysteries' [Amuli: 1966] he links the names of the early Sufis with the Twelver Imams and stresses that knowledge was transmitted to the Sufi *shaykhs* from 'Ali. Alongside this there evolved a pattern of 'moderation' *tashayyu' hasan* towards Shi'ite ideas amongst Sunnis with Amuli exemplifying this attitude by seeking to create an integration of Sufi thought with Shi'a ideas:

> Among all the branches of Islam and the various Muhammadan groups, there is none which has vilified the Sufis as much as the Shi'ites have done; in return, no group has railed against the Shi'ites as much as much as the Sufis. And that despite the fact that both groups have one and the same origin; that they drink from the same fount; that the end to which they refer is one and the same.
>
> [Quoted in Corbin: 1972. 179].

In essence this involved a recognition of the virtues of 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn with some rejection of Mu'awiya and his son Yazid without denying the first three caliphs as righteous and properly elected.

Even more importantly however, the Sufi Orders as they began to form with chains of teachers also started to adopt pro-Shi'i expressions and thought. The majority of Sufi *shaykhs* began to make claims to be descendants of 'Ali, for example ar-Rifa'i [d. 578/1182], al-Badawi [d. 675/1276], and ad-Dusuqi [d. 676/1277]. The Sufi idea of the *shaykh* came to parallel the Shi'a concept of the Imam in the same period with 'Ali becoming almost as significant a figure in Sufism as in Shi'ism. Some of these orders moved to more specifically Shi'a orientations. The Kubrawiyya, originating in Khurasan in the seventh/thirteenth century adopted such a change of focus. As-Simnani [d. 736/1336], whilst a *shaykh* in a major sub-line of this order and still regarding himself as a Sunni, saw 'Ali as pre-eminent to the first three c'Aliphs and the *qutb* of the time. Another leader of the Kubrawiyya, 'Ali Hamdani [d. 786/1385], regarded as a Sunni, offered veneration to 'Ali and the Prophet's household taking this alignment of Sufi-Shi'a ideas to India [Rizvi: 1978 Vol 1. 291-293].

The Prophet Muhammad had made custodian of the knowledge of the Futuwwa 'Ali bin Abi Talib, the Said, and therefore the *futuwwa* and the *Tariqa* were directly linked with Muhammad.

[Rizvi: 1978 vol 1. 293].

Several later lines in the Kubrawiyya became overtly Shi'i, which with the emergence of the Safavid movement, was to have significance for the future of Iran. The Safavid order, founded by Shaykh Saftyu'd-Din [650/1252 - 735/1334], moved from a peaceful emphasis into a military form with extremist *ghulat* beliefs before reverting to more orthodox Twelver Shi'a patterns.

During the late Safavid period, Shi'ism as the state religion in Iran underwent paradoxical developments that were to influence Sufism's subsequent flourishing in the sub-continent. Under Muhammad Baqir Majlisi [d. 1110/1699] a process of suppression of Sufi expressions began in Iran. Until this time, Shi'ism and Sufism had been closely linked and Sufism had been the means for pro-Shi'a feelings amongst the Sunni majority peoples. Majlisi reversed this trend and established the more formal legalistic model of Shi'ism which he considered to be authentic. Paradoxically however, he did much to establish a populist pattern of devotion to the *Ahl i-Bayt* by encouraging the mourning rituals of Ashura for Imams Hasan and Husayn, visiting the tombs of the Imams and their descendants *ziyarat*, and stressing the mediatorial roles of the Imams for believers. The devotion therefore, of the masses became transferred from the Sufi *shaykhs* to the Imamate line, he served as the exemplars of faith and intercessors for the people.

Sufi orders were to enjoy little respite when representatives of Shi'a orientated Sufis were to return to Iran from India in the eighteenth century [Momem: 1985. 213]. The prominent *'Alim* 'Aqa Muhammad 'Ali-i Bihbihani [1141/1732 - 1216/1801] persecuted the Ni'matullahi Sufis, fiercely attacking all Sufis in his writings, and personally condemning some adherents to death [Pourjavady: 1999. 623]. The very similarities between Sufism and mainstream Twelver Shi'ism created antagonism amongst the Twelver *ulama*. The messianic undertones of Sufism bred suspicions of rivalry to the Imamate. There was the corresponding emphasis on rationalism in Usuli thought but the notion of deputyship to the Hidden Imam also embraced features of non-rationality which Usulism could not avoid as it met a spiritual need not fulfilled by reason alone. Intuition and illumination were it seemed as essential as rational judgements. Consequently, the *ulama*'s opposition to Sufism was one of spiritual authority and its sources [Amanat: 1988. 98-132].

However, as much as the Shi'a *ulama* since the times of Majlisi and Bihbihani have been opposed to Sufism, by contrast *irfan* is more acceptable. Such study and practice embraces much of the technical vocabulary of Sufism but is devoid of features such as the 'orders' *tariqa,* initiation ceremonies *bai'at,* the *murshid - murid* relationship, repetitive prayer *dikhr,* and beliefs such as *wujdat al-wujud* monistic understanding of reality. By contrast *irfan* addresses the inner meanings of the Qur'an *ta'wil* as an intellectual activity. Thus an esoteric mystical tradition has been maintained into contemporary Twelver Shi'ism as a parallel to the distinct mystical ecstatic tradition of Sufi populism.

This is exemplified in the person of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib. As 'Ali is the key source figure for the Shi'a as he holds both political and spiritual authority after the Prophet so almost all the Sunni Sufi orders, apart from the Naqshbandi, look back to him as the spiritual authority after the Prophet. Within Sunni Sufism however, the place of 'Ali is not seen as something marked as Shi'a but rather as directly linked with Islamic esotericism in and of itself. The example of 'Ali, and the devotion shown to him and for that matter to Husayn, shows how intimately Sufism and Shi'ism are connected. It needs to be noted that Sufism per se has no *Shari'ah* but Sufi *tariqa* are attached to particular *shari'ah* schools. Shi'ism however, has both a *shari'ah* and an esoteric dimension as expressed for example in the contemporary Ni'matullahi Order.

A number of examples of the inter-relationship of Shi'a and Sufi can therefore be noted. Firstly, in Islam generally and especially within Sufism a 'saint' is termed *wali* and sanctity is *wilayah.* Within Shi'ism, the power of the Imam termed in Persian *walayat* [from the same root as *wilayah*] is closely tied to *wilayah.* So in Shi'a thought, the Prophet not only brought a law from God but also offered guidance *walayah* and *wilayah,* which he transmitted to 'Ali and his family line of the Imams. Since the Imam is alive albeit hidden, this function is at work within the world and can guide humankind. The 'cycle of initiation/guidance ' *da'irat al-walayah*' follows the 'cycle of prophecy' '*da'irat al-nubuwwah*' and continues today with the offer of an ongoing esoteric presence within Islam. *Wilayah* also concerns an ever-living spiritual presence within Islam that enables believers to practise the spiritual life. There are differences on who is the 'seal' of sanctity with some Sunni authorities such as Ibn Arabi relating this to Jesus and Shi'a authors applying the title to 'Ali and the Mahdi. Nonetheless there are similarities between the Sunni Sufi and Shi'a

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distinction from Ibn Arabi who held that the Seal of the cycle of God's friendship was Jesus, Amuli held that this figure was ʻAli ibn Abu Talib. Moreover, the seal of the particular cycle of God's 'friends' as initiated by Muhammad could not be from outside the Prophet's own family but would be the Twelfth Imam in a messianic role.

This proposition of Amuli has been discussed and criticised by Chodkiewicz [1993. 139-140 and 145 n 47], who also questions Corbin's view that in this context Shi'a apologists were reowning what had originally been their own ideas in the beginning. It simply has to be noted that whilst paradoxically Ibn Arabi's ideas do bear a similarity to Shi'a understandings of the Imamate he was also critical of Shi'a attitudes. Baldick for example affirms that the Ibn Arabian concept of the 'Perfect Man' may well have arisen from Shi'a influence or in his own particular perception from a pre-Islamic gnostic/Mazdaean influence [Baldick: 1989. 33 and 102].

Such a doctrine, alongside those concerning the 'Perfect Man' from Ibn Arabi, are similar to those from Shi'a sources on the *Qutb* and the Imam. These come essentially from and point to the same esoteric reality, the *haqiqat al-Muhammadiyah,* with the possibility of Shi'a influence upon the later Sufi ideas [Al-Shibli: 1963-64. Vol 2. 52-53].

A third perception held in common between Sufis and Shi'a is the 'Light of Muhammad' *al-nur al-muhammadi* and the chain of initiation *silsilah.* Within the Shi'a traditions it is held that 'primordial light is passed from one prophet to another and thus to Muhammad, and thence to ʻAli and the succeeding Imams. This light is both a protection for the prophets and the Imams against sin, enabling them to be 'inerrant' *mas'um* and giving them gnosis of divine mysteries. To gain this knowledge a person must become attached to the light by adherence to the Imam, who after the Prophet will act in a mediatory role for this divine knowledge. Similarly, in Sufi orders gnosis is transmitted when a person is linked to a chain *silsilah,* which runs back to the Prophet Muhammad himself and from whom 'blessing' *barakah* will flow to the initiate. This chain is based on the sense of continuous spiritual presence akin to the 'light of Muhammad' found in Shi'ism. In the key figure of Ja'far al-Sadiq these teachings do converge, and as in other cases have the same source in the same esoteric teachings of Islam [Taylor: 1966. 97].

Fourthly, in comparing Sufi and Shi'a doctrines, it is essential to examine the stages of the spiritual life *maqamat-i irfani.* Majlisi in *Bibar al-anwar* recorded the lives of the Prophet and the Imams by relating the inner spiritual states and stages of growth of the individuals. Thus, within Shi'ism the goal of the spiritual life is the imitation of the Prophet, the Imams, and the Shaykhs copying their inner spiritual development. Likewise in Sufism, the same goal cannot be attained except by stages and movement from one to the next. These stages are not ends in themselves as the aim still remains in the vision of God but they are the steps towards the goal.

Contact and fertilisation of ideas between the two movements was closest from the first to the eighth Imams. Key Shi'a writings: *Nahj al-Balagah* attributed to ‘Ali, the *Sahifah sajjadiyyah* of the fourth Imam, the *Zabur-i al-i Muhammad* 'the Psalms of the Family of the Prophet', and the *Usul al-kafi* of al-Kulayni containing the sayings of the Imams give an outline of gnosis, which have served as a basis for later Sufi writings and commentaries. The technical language may not be the same but the doctrines are essentially the same as one finds in classical Sufi writings [Massignon: 1954.]. During the lifetimes of these Imams there was interplay between them and the early Sufi teachers such as al-Basri and al-Qarani who were linked to ‘Ali; with Al-Adham, al-Hafi'i, and al-Bistami are linked to Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq [Tabataba'i: nd. 114].

> 'Even so, these [Sufi] masters traced their spiritual chain, which in the spiritual life is like the genealogical chain of a person, through their previous masters to ‘Ali. Also the results of their visions and intuitions as transmitted to us convey mostly truths concerning divine unity and the stations of the spiritual life which are found in the sayings of ‘Ali and other Shi'ite Imams.'
>
> [Tabataba'i: nd. 114].

Following the occultation of the Twelfth Imam, Sufism and Shi'ism became more distinct from one another. After the lifetimes of the Imams, there was the developing political activism amongst the Shi'a whilst the Sufi movements were tending to avoid political involvement. There were occasional contacts and mutual awareness shown in ibn Babuyah's descriptions of the Sufi circle *halqah* and prayer of recollection *dhikhr*. The Sufi guilds and orders continued to show consciousness of Shi'ism with particular devotion to ‘Ali.

In the contemporary Muslim world there are examples of rapprochement between Sufism and Shi'ism: there are adherents of a regular Sufi type order as the Ni'matullahi, who follow a path very similar to Sunni Sufi groups; there also those who have chosen to follow a particular master but one without a *silsilah;* and those who individually have received spiritual vision and gnostic inspiration.

The Shi'a respondents in the fieldwork aspect of the research acknowledged these parallels and commonly held perspectives. Several however, were cautious in their offering too close a link with Sufi ideas and influences.

Respondent 1.2:

10. Can you describe the significance of Sufi Orders/influences for yourself and your understanding of Imam 'Ali?

I don't have much knowledge of Sufi orders – they are Sunni people,……….

And Respondent 1.4:

10. Can you describe the significance of Sufi Orders/influences for yourself and your understanding of Imam 'Ali?

I am not sure about the Sufis…….I have not had much experience of them…..we have a student here who was in the Emirates when he met a Shi'a brother……he had been influenced by the Sufis in his past…..but realised the full truth when the Shi'a position was explained fully to him.

Respondent 1.10

10. Can you describe the significance of Sufi Orders/influences for yourself and your understanding of Imam 'Ali?

I have had very little to do with the Sufis……..My understanding of 'Ali however, comes from the Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet and the Imams.

Shi'ism and Sufism in general however, share a common source in that they are both tied to the mystical dimension of Islam and draw inspiration from the same sources. They equally trace their origins and authority back to the reality of the light embodied in the Prophet, and transmitted through Imam 'Ali and his successors to themselves as adherents. This focus for a consistent search for spiritual fulfilment and guidance in every generation alongside adherence to the revealed text and thus the parallel guidance of the *shari'ah* is feature common to Sufi streams and to Shi'ism alike. Both streams of Islam affirm the need of an apodictic guide, be it the *pir,* the *qutb,* or the Imam. This has little to do at times with political or human authority but involves the seeking for the 'Perfect Man' *al-insan al- kamil.*

2.7.11 Distinctive understandings of 'Ali within Shi'a and Sunni Sufi sources.

In both Shi'ism and Sunni Sufi substreams there is acceptance that 'Ali both received divine knowledge from the Prophet and himself possessed considerable knowledge of the religious sciences of Islam. He knew both outward *zahir* and inward *batin* aspects of this science and in particular that of Qur'anic exposition.

Equally, 'Ali alone is understood to have held within himself the two qualities of *iman* faith and *ilm* spiritual knowledge. This view is supported by a hadith related by al-Tabarsi:

> Ask me before you lose me. For by Him who created mankind and the soul of man, if you ask about any verse [of the Qur'an], whether revealed at Mecca or Medina, and the reason for its revelation, I will tell you about it.

[al-Tabarsi: 1386/1966. I. 384-385].

The sixth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq naturally agrees with this estimation of 'Ali with a tradition ascribed to him, which says:

> 'Ali is the *sirat* Straight path of God whom God entrusted with the knowledge of everything in heaven and earth. He is God's Wali over the people and the Trustee of His Truth.

[al-Busri: n.d. 140].

The agreement between Sufi Sunni and Shi'ite alike on the knowledge of 'Ali in the divine sciences is affirmed because of their close relationship and spiritual affinity. However, some Sufis including al-Junayd whilst stressing the significance of 'Ali's knowledge and his influence upon the Sufi schools equally feel that 'Ali's military activities precluded him from still greater influence [al-Tusi: 1914. 129]. A reason for this perception is that 'Ali's knowledge was not based upon personal effort but charismatic endowment. Here al-Junayd is putting 'Ali into the same category as the mythic character al-Khadir, who is believed to have received divine knowledge by spiritual intuition. An interpretation by al-Junayd of Surah 18. 65 is used to endorse this opinion:

> ...and found one of Our servants to whom We had vouchsafed Our mercy and whom We had endowed with knowledge of Our own.

In effect 'Ali's preoccupation with military expeditions and campaigns in al-Junayd's perception prevented 'Ali offering a wealth of religious knowledge and teaching, which would have benefited Sufi adherents. Consequently, although 'Ali may be termed 'head of the Sufis' he does not have total leadership over them [al-Tusi: 1914. 129-132]. Other Sunni Sufis were to exalt 'Ali highly as for example, ibn al-Farid [d. /1235] [al-Farid: 1352/1933. 60] attributed to 'Ali the ability to interpret the Qur'an in both hidden and obvious meanings and Jalal al-Din Rumi [d. 672/1273] [al-Din Rumi: 1336/1957. 60] see 'Ali as the central mystery of the whole world akin to the Platonic Logos. The difference of understanding of 'Ali's role between Shi'a and

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> I am leaving you two important things, such that if you adhere to them, you will never go astray – the Book of God [the Qur'an] and *Ahl l-Bayti* [my family], and the twain shall not be separated.
>
> [Muslim: 1334/1915. 7. 123].

It is also argued that the 'family' is not to be restricted to the five persons of the Prophet, 'Ali, Fatima, al-Hasan and al-Husayn. Al-Qushayri [d. 465/1072] narrated a tradition of the Prophet, who answered a question on 'Who are the family of Muhammad' by saying, 'they are every pious Muslim' [al-Qushayri: 1966. 1. 277]. Other writers with Sufi sympathies and influence such as Abd al-Qadir al-Jili [d. 561/1166] and Muhyi al-Din ibn Arabi [d. 638/1240] held that the family of the Prophet included all his wives with other relatives such as uncles and their descendants. Al-Jili however, differentiated the concept of the 'family' into four categories: 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan, and Husayn; secondly, the Prophet's wives; the descendants of Hasan and Husayn as a third group; and fourthly, all other relatives.

Shi'a and clearly some Sunni adherents hold to the perspective that the 'household of the Prophet' refers exclusively to the key figures surrounding Muhammad and his daughter citing Surah 3. 61-66 as their basis.

> This revelation, and this wise admonition, We recite to you. Jesus is like Adam in the sight of God. He created him from dust and then said to him: 'Be', and he was. This is the truth from your Lord: therefore do not doubt it. To those that dispute with you concerning him after the knowledge you have received, say: 'Come, let us gather our sons and your sons, our wives and your wives, our people and your people. We will then pray and call down the curse of God on every liar.

This verse is termed the 'cursing' *mubahala* by Qur'anic commentators and refers to a debate in 10/631 between Muhammad and a delegation of Christians from Najran.

The tradition relates that the Christians finally acknowledged the spiritual authority of Muhammad who was with 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn [al-Tabari: 1322/1904. 192-193]. The position of 'Ali in the *Ahl i-Bayt* is affirmed positively by the Shi'a scholar Shaykh al-Mufid [338/950 – 413/1022], who uses the incident to define the qualities of 'Ali and his equality with the Prophet [al-Mufid: 1981. 116-118]. The Sunni scholar Ahmad al-Din ibn Kathir in narrating another version of the scene does not mention 'Ali's presence and relates that Fatima walked closely behind her father.

In Shi'a traditions however, the 'household' of the Prophet describes 'Ali, Fatima and their two sons with no-one else as their equals and the heirs of the Prophet in the leadership of the *ummah.* Consequently, Fatima is also given a defined place in Muslim spirituality.

Fatima, daughter of Muhammad and his first wife Khadija, for whom we have solid evidence of her historical life, has a biographical literature of her own, although much it is scarce in actual historical facts [Lammens: 1913. II, 85]. The date of her birth is somewhat contested with the majority of historical sources placing it c. 609 - 614. Little is mentioned in the early historical accounts of the period prior to the Hijrah from Mecca to Madina, but particular note is made of her grief at the death of her mother, Khadija in 619 before the *Hijrah.* It is only with her marriage and subsequent motherhood that Fatima becomes a significant figure in the first generation of the *ummah.*

The date of her birth is unsettled, as is according to Lammens her place in the order of the Prophet's daughters. All except Umm Kultham is claimed to have been the eldest.

In this case the compilers of the *sirah* biographies, and the traditions proposed that the comparatively advanced age of Khadija should be taken into account, They have also wanted to avoid Fatima being too old at the time of her marriage to 'Ali. Such considerations are difficult to reconcile with the consequence that Fatima has been portrayed in different texts as older and then younger than her sisters Rukayya, Zainab and Umm Kulthum have have. Amongst Shi'ite writers the preference has been to see Fatima as the youngest of the daughters of the Prophet and the one with a remarkable conception and birth and endowed with considerable graces and virtues.

> ...there are various traditions with minor verbal differences and the same fundamental meaning that Fatima Zahra [AS] was created from a sperm produced from heavenly food.
>
> [Ordoni: nd. 37].

The elder sisters are understood to have been married first and then a youthful Fatima would have been married in due order. If this were not the case, it is reasoned, the companions of the Prophet displayed a lack of enthusiasm to marry into his immediate family, and Fatima remained single and celibate for a time beyond the norm feared for and by Arab women. Protagonists of this view are pro-'Alid with Mas'udi putting her birth eight years before the *hijrah* when Khadijah would have been sixty years old. This opinion is weighted by comparison with 'Aisha's situation when she was betrothed to the Prophet at nine years of age. As Fatima is the Shi'a equivalent of 'Aisha, this is a plan to give her the same status as the Prophet's youngest wife with whom in her lifetime she had strained relations [Mernissi: 1991. 108].

The dating of Fatima's birth and marriage can only be undertaken with the accepted date of her death – 11 AH. If three years separating the *Hijrah* from the death of Khadijah in 619 are added, there is no agreement amongst scholars above the age of fourteen for her marriage. Some commentators considering the lateness of her marriage to 'Ali have placed the birth of Fatima at around the prophetic calling of her father. The dating therefore is between 609 and 614.

The oldest historians and earliest *sirah* writers such as Ibn Hisham give minor attention to Fatima. In the work of Ibn Hanbal, the *musnad* of Fatima, only one page is given to her with two hundred and fifty allocated to 'Aisha. In Ibn Sa'd's *Tabakat* there is an account of 'Ali but no mention of Fatima. There is little allusion to her in the pro-'Alid document *Kitab al-Aghani.* Thus there is the minimum of knowledge about the young Fatima except her *kunya* 'Umm Abiha' and her grief at the death of her mother.

Lammens portrays Fatima as a melancholic and unattractive figure:

> Caractere chagrin et perpetuellement voile de deuil! On ne l'ignorait pas dans la famille des 'Alides. La semillant et frivole Sokaina, fille de Hosain, se felicitait de pas la compter parmi ses aieules maternelles et expliquait de la sorte son humeur folatre. Au physique, Fatima ne se truvait pas mieux avantagee. Sa constitution debile, sa maigreur, ses couleurs anemiees, ses frequentes infirmites la rendirent impropre aux durs travaux, reserves alors aux femmes arabes.

[Lammens: 1912. 17].

Massignon offers an alternative picture of Fatima in which he contrasts Fatima with the Catholic devotion to Mary, the mother of Jesus, portraying her as an alternative figure to the Marian cultus [Massignon: 1963. I 103]. The seeming length of time for her marriage and the paucity of her dowry are often explained not by the lack of suitors but to their abundance. Abu Bakr and 'Umar are mentioned amongst them but it was to 'Ali that the Prophet chose to marry her. At this time she is said to have been fifteen years old, whilst other sources state eighteen years. This latter date would have been more if she was about thirty years old at her death. Normally, writers avoid this issue as girls in the Arabian peninsular would have been married between nine and fifteen years of age. Here once more, is a comparison with and an allusion to 'Aisha who was married at nine years.

After the *Hijra,* 'Ali or more likely Zaid ibn Haritha [Lammens: 1912. 26] brought Fatima from Mecca to Madhina, whilst her sister Zainab remained in Mecca. The actual marriage is usually not placed before the battle of Badr, whilst others date it after the battle of Uhud. If Fatima were the younger of the sisters, and following the normal custom of marriage by seniority, she could not marry before Umm Kultum, who married 'Umar between the two conflicts. It may be feasible to see the betrothal as occurring between these events and the actual consummation as after Uhud. It certainly seems that there was a lack of enthusiasm on both sides for the union. 'Ali claimed poverty whilst Fatima demonstrated no attraction to 'Ali. The justification for the marriage was given by the Prophet as a divine command upon both people.

2.8.2 Fatima and 'Ali.

'Ali and Fatima shared in the initial poverty of the Madhina community but their marriage was marked as well by conflict. They were settled near to the Prophet's dwelling and he had to intervene in their discord on several occasions. The births of Hasan and Husayn in 4 and 5 AH respectively seems to have alleviated the situation little. Tradition has shown Fatima as too weak to feed either infant and the task was assumed by one of the wives of 'Abbas, who had remained in Mecca until the final surrender of the town to the Muslim *ummah.* This possibility was taken by the Abbasids to their advantage displaying their sympathies with the Prophet's family and 'Alid grandsons. Shi'ite scholars state that a third son, Muhassin was born but died young. There were also two daughters born to 'Ali and Fatima, Zainab and Umm Kultum, the latter in the last year of her mother's life.

There was clearly a strained relationship and rivalry between Fatima and 'Aisha, as well as with other female members of the Prophet's household. It is asserted that to maintain the peace Muhammad had the door adjoining his and Fatima's dwellings closed up. After the battle of Uhud however, she is portrayed as tending to her father's wounds. It is reported that at one time 'Ali wearied of Fatima and her temperamental lachrymose state and planned to take another wife, Makhzumite, the daughter of Abu Ahab. The Prophet intervened and gave his son-in-law a choice between monogamy or divorcing Fatima. Other patriarchal traditions show Fatima in a poor light – her weak health and being compelled to undertake the hardest tasks without assistance from either her father or husband. Lammens records that 'Ali was harsh with his wife and preferred to sleep at the mosque rather than sharing their home:

> Au lieu d'aborder de front la solution des problemes, crees par sa situation domestique, il prit l'habitude de deserter le domicile conjugal. Frequemment il prefera aller passer la nuit sous la veranda du *dar* de son beau-pere, servant de mosquee.
>
> [Lammens: 1912. 58].

From the battle of Uhud in 5 AH until the siege of Madhina by the Arab confederacy began the greatest foreign activity of the Prophet, which overlapped with the married life of his daughter. Absorbed in his concerns the Prophet was too preoccupied to attend to Fatima's needs and he turned to the circle of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and thus to 'Aisha for support. The *sahih* and *musnad* collections stress the affection, which the Prophet lavished upon his grandsons Hasan and Husayn even when he was at prayer in the mosque. The *sunnah* however, also emphasises the tenderness given to the children of his daughter Zainab, upon those of Zaid ibn Haritha, of Dja'far and even those of Zubair ibn al-'Awwuam, as well as the young 'Abbasids. Such reports are designed to counter the claims and influences for the Shi'a understanding of the Prophet's lineage and descendants. It is evident however, that 'Ali and Fatima's two sons did gain the particular affection of the Prophet and with the deaths of various of his children and grandchildren, it is possible that the Prophet did look to the children of Fatima and 'Ali for his succession in some form. ''Ali shall perpetuate my line' is one hadith attributed to the Prophet [EI. 1. II. 86].

Surah 3. 60 provides the frame for the incident of 'the People of the Cloak' during which Muhammad met the Christian envoys of Najran. The scene portrays the Prophet meeting the Christian representatives with 'Ali, Fatima and their family. In Shi'a tradition this has led to the *Ashab al-Kisa* 'privileged ones of the cloak' and the exclamation by the Prophet that these 'are members of my family'. This is a means for Shi'a presentations of the immediate family of the Prophet as spiritually privileged and distinct from other believers.

Becoming the owner of wealthy oases in the northern Hijaz, the Prophet gave to Fatima an allowance of some eighty-five loads of wheat from this property as he had done for his wives. In this final part of the campaign to repossess Mecca, Fatima began to play a visible part. She is mentioned as one of the people whom Abu Sufyan tried to interest in the renewal of the Treaty of Hudaibiya and that she accompanied her father on the military manoeuvre which ended in his entry into Mecca and its capture. Fatima is also said to have been present at the Prophet's farewell pilgrimage and when he succumbed to his illness in 11/631 Fatima went to his bedside which was jealously guarded by 'Aisha to hear the Prophet's words that she would be the first of his family to join him in Paradise.

2.8.3 The final months.

New difficulties were to confront Fatima in the wake of her father's death. The dispute over the immediate succession to the Prophet led to 'Ali secluding himself with his followers from the inner circle of Abu Bakr. Dispute ensued over Fatima's claim to a share of her father's estate, who had, it seems, died intestate. She laid claim to the oasis of Fadak, which in the strictest sense of the word had been her father's property. Yet Abu Bakr declared the Prophet's lands including Fadak as state property and answered Fatima's claim with the words of the Prophet himself:

Prophets do not leave heirs.

[Lammens: 1913 II. 87].

Fatima rejoined with reference to Surah 27. 16,

> Solomon received David's inheritance.

To this Fatima is said to have added:

> Prophecy and the exalted gifts, attached to this dignity are not heritable, agreed! But the estate remains.

[Lammens: 1913. II. 87].

Even so, Fatima was overridden by Abu Bakr with the consequence that she resolved never to speak with him again, and refused to see him as she lay dying. This is dated in 11/631 between one and six months after her father's death. The traditions affirm this in the light of both her father's prediction and the behaviour of 'Ali as he made terms with Abu Bakr and began to marry additional wives following her death. The latter development would have been unthinkable during Fatima's own lifetime. The same pattern of *a priori* reasoning is at work here in this dating of her death as has been used in the dating of her birth and earlier life. It transpires that 'Ali was not with her in this final illness but he arrived to arrange her burial rites. Her exact age is unknown as it varies between twenty three and thirty five years of age, with the earlier age being due to the annalists' concern to present Fatima as young as possible at her marriage.

2.8.4 Understandings of Fatima.

The significance of Fatima in subsequent Muslim thought and devotion is out of all proportion to the lack of historical detail about her life, and in particular its earliest part. In contrast to 'Aisha, Fatima is rarely mentioned as a transmitter of *Hadith* in the *isnads,* yet she becomes the central figure in Muslim piety and especially Shi'ite devotionalism. She provides the final physical link with the Prophet and so gains enduring importance.

Fatima is not mentioned by name in the Qur'an although some verses have been taken and interpreted in such a manner as to allow for subsequent hagiographic understandings. Surah 33. 33 for example contains the phrase 'people of the house' *Ahl al-bayt,* which Shi'a commentators have limited to five people: Muhammad, 'Ali, Fatima, Hasan and Husayn. One such commentator, Muhammad al-Hasan al-Tusi extends the concepts of infallibility and sinlessness *ismah* beyond the Prophet and the Imams to Fatima herself [al-Tusi: 1957-63. VIII, 339-341]. In this trend can be seen the seedbed for the later veneration for Fatima and a cultus surrounding her. In addition, Shi'a exegesis of Surah 3. 61 links Fatima with the other members of the Prophet's household in the challenge to mutual adjuration *al-mubahalah* issued against the Christian delegates from Najran.

The Qur'anic estimate of Mary is found in particular in Surah 3. 41,

And remember the angel's words to Mary. They said:
'God has chosen you. He has made you pure and exalted you above womankind.
Mary, be obedient to your Lord;
Bow down and worship with the worshippers.

Historically, Shi'ite exegetes have brought both recognisably traditional as well as individual interpretations to such verses. Abu al-Futuh Razi [290/1087 – 318/ 1131] wrote one of the earliest Qur'anic commentaries in Persian with *Rawd al-Ginan wa ruh al-Ganan.* In his presentation Mary is chosen by virtue of her dedication to God, is physically purified from menstruation and parturition as well as from all male contact, with her status as 'over the women of mankind' is solely for her own lifetime. With these statements about Mary, Abu al-Futuh parallels traditional Sunni exegesis. However, he then moves onto distinctive Shi'a emphases by stressing that Fatima is in fact pre-eminent over all women for the whole of time since she is 'part of the body of the Messenger', which is different from being part of 'Imran [al-Futuh: 1382. III. 36]. Support for this position is given by al-Futuh in citing a number of *hadith* such as:

As for my daughter, Fatima, she is chief of the women of the world from the first to the last.

[al-Futuh: 1382. III. 37].

In addition, Fatima is seen as a virgin, free of menstruation which al-Futuh considers to be synonymous [al-Futuh: 1382. III. 37].

A sixteenth century scholar Maulana Fath Allah ibn Maulana Shukr Allah Kashani in his Persian work *Tafsir –e-Kabir-e-eManhaj al-Sadiqin fi Ilzam al-Mukhalifin,* takes al-Futuh's interpretation further whilst recounting ideas from Fakhr al-Din al-Razi's exegesis. A Sunni scholar al-Razi [544/1149 – 606/1209] produced a vast commentary *Mafatih al-Ghayb,* as a rebuttal of Mutazilite concepts from an Asharite perspective. He stresses that Mary's role is linked with her mother's commitment of her within the womb to God's service and thus to be 'purified'. This embraces both spiritual and physical dimensions in that spiritually Mary was cleansed of unbelief and physically from contact with men and menstruation. Kashani follows these themes by emphasising that Mary is freed from 'polytheism', and is given a child without a husband and is thus above women of her own time [Kashani: 1346-47. II. 223-224]. He follows al-Futuh Razi by stressing that Fatima is above all women repeating Muhammad's statement that she is 'chief of the women of mankind'.

'Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai [b.1903] as a modern Shi'a scholar completed a Qur'anic commentary in Arabic *Al-Mizan.* In this he both follows his predecessors, al-Futuh Razi and Kashani and in typical Shi'a style also becomes innovative. Imitating traditional exegesis, Tabatabai considers Mary to be chosen because of her consecration to God's service [al-Tabatabai: nd. III. 188]. Mary's purity is again seen in traditional received terms signifying virginity and freedom from menstruation [Tabatabai: nd. III. 224]. However, Tabatabai neither makes comparison between Mary and Fatima nor does he claim for Fatima precedence over others. He joins the Sunni scholar Fakr al-Din in finding no grounds for simply placing Mary over women of her particular time.

There are two other significant Qur'anic references to Mary and Jesus where they are called *aya* 'sign' to humankind in Surahs 21. 91 and 23. 50.

> And of the woman who kept her chastity. We breathed into her of Our spirit, and made her and her son a sign to all mankind.
>
> [S 21. 91].

> We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign to mankind, and gave them a shelter on a peaceful hill-side watered by a fresh spring.
>
> [S 23. 50].

Sunni commentators are generally united in their interpretation of the singular noun *aya* referring to the birth of Jesus without the participation of a human father as a unified 'sign' to humankind [al-Tabari: 1373-1377. XVII. 84 and al-Zamakshari: nd III. 105]. Fakhr al-Din al-Razi as another Sunni representative scholar, whilst agreeing with al-Tabari and al-Zamahshari takes the understanding of *aya* further by listing additional features which surround Mary: she was nourished by angels from Paradise, she did not feed at her mother's breasts at all, and like Jesus she spoke in her infancy [al-Din Razi: 1382. XX.II. 218].

The Shi'a commentators already cited add little to these interpretations of the two *aya* verses with the main comments being restricted to the dual significances drawn from the singular noun. Al-Futuh Razi for example, comments that the birth of Jesus without a paternal agency and Mary becoming pregnant without a man is 'one miracle and one sign' [al-Futuh Razi: 1382. VIII. 140-141]. Kashani offers no fresh ideas and principally addresses the grammatical issue of the singular noun and its dual meanings [Kashani: 1346-47. VI. 17 & 234]. Al-Tabatabai also adds no new comment to the traditional exegesis simply commenting on the respective ordering of the names in the two verses. In Surah 21. 91 Mary is placed first because chronologically she precedes her son whilst in Surah 23. 50 she is being honoured by having her name juxtaposed with a prophet [al-Tabatabai: nd. XIV. 317].

These commentators represent examples of understandings of devotion to a feminine exemplar of faith through the centuries. Certainly by the Safavid period the veneration accorded to Fatima evolved to such a level that Muhammad Baqir Majlisi [1038/1628 – 1111/1699] was able to present a compendium of materials on Fatima's life, the workings of God within and for her, and the eschatological significance of her life. In *Jala al-'uyun,* Majlisi refers to the epithets given to her such as *Umm Abiha,* 'mother of her father', *Zahra* 'shining', *Batul* 'virgin', and *Maryam al-Kubra* 'Mary the Greater'.

Within the Shi'a tradition are examples of the devotion shown to Fatima and her relationship to all women including Mary. Majlisi records *hadith* on this theme, for example:

> Muhammad is reported to say: 'On the night of the Mir'aj when I reached the sixth heaven Gabriel took my hand and brought me into Paradise. There I saw a tree of light before which stood two angels. On the tree I beheld some fresh and fragrant dates. I ate one of the dates and it became sperm in my loins. When I returned to earth I had intercourse with Khadija and she became pregnant with Fatima. Thus Fatima is a human houri because she has the appearance of a human female form and the characteristics and moral attributes of a houri. Now whenever I am near Fatima, I smell from her the odour of Paradise.
>
> [Majlisi: 1348. II. 126-127].

There is a sense that Mary is subservient to Fatima in this approach and context.

In addressing the different titles given to Fatima, Majlisi begins with the most common *zahra* 'shining', which links with the theme of light that pervades the narratives surrounding her. The descriptions of her conception elaborate accounts of light emanating from God to both the Prophet, 'Ali and to Fatima in turn. Majlisi continues this tradition of light by describing the light which daily flowed from her whilst she was at prayer. The light is described as white at dawn, yellow at noon and red in the evening. This light was transmitted from her sons to the rest of the Imams [Majlisi: 1348 II. 132-133].

In her very name, Fatima, with its significance of 'separation' there comes the sense of angelic direction.

> I 'separate' you from ignorance through knowledge and I 'separate' you from becoming menstruous.
>
> [Majlisi: 1348. II. 134].

An alternative, and more popular explanation for the name 'Fatima' is that it means that God has separated her and her group from the dangers of hell. In accord with this are understandings of Fatima as an intercessor on the Day of Judgement [Majlisi: 1348. II. 134].

In referring to Fatima as *batul* 'virgin', Majlisi is once more affirming freedom from the sexual 'uncleanness' of menstruation and how this is entirely appropriate for the daughter of a Prophet.

Whilst Majlisi makes no reference to Mary when discussing Fatima's *ism* as *batul* , in the list of *isms* with which he concludes his writing on this theme, he makes an explicit connection between Fatima and Mary in describing the Prophet's daughter as *Maryam al-kubra* 'Mary the Greater' [Majlisi: 1348. II. 137].

Even whilst she was in the womb of her mother, Fatima is said to have spoken with her comforting her against the abuse of the Meccan women [Majlisi: 1348. 129] in parallel to the account of Jesus defending his mother from the cradle against taunts [Surah 19. 29].

> Because of Khadija's estrangement from the women of the Quraish, they refused to help her when her labour began. Deeply distressed, she suddenly saw before her four tall women, and became even more frightened and agitated. Then one of them spoke, saying: "Don't be afraid, Khadija; we are sent from God as your helpers." The four then introduced themselves as Sarah, wife of Ibrahim, Asiya, daughter of Muzahim [wife of Pharoah]; Mary, daughter of 'Imran; and Kulthum, sister of Musa ibn 'Imran. They stationed themselves around Khadija as midwives to Fatima's birth, cleansing and dressing the new-born infant and rejoicing with Khadija at the birth of this blessed daughter.
>
> [Majlisi: 1348. II. 130-131].

As has been noted *supra* reference is made to the meagreness of Fatima's dowry in relation to her eligibility for marriage and her eventual marriage to 'Ali. Within the development of devotion to Fatima her dowry is represented as the simplicity of the Prophet's household and it has had a deep effect upon Muslim spiritual ethos. The

Sufis in particular saw poverty as a spiritual quality to be emulated on the 'way'. Thus Fatima's simple dowry shows a typical Sufi ideal of disregard for luxury. It is recounted by Attar in his *Ilahinama* to illustrate the view that to follow the Prophet the believer has to disregard wealth. Attar relates:

> Usama stated 'The Master [Muhammad] commanded 'Summon Abu Bakr and 'Umar before me',
> When both Abu Bakr and 'Umar came forth, the Prophet summoned Zahra also.
> To her he said: 'All that you have for your dowry, I wish you to bring before me.
> Although you are the light of my eyes, O! illuminator of hearts, today I will bestow you to Haydar.'
> Fatima, that unique one, went and instantly brought out from the house a hand mill,
> An old palm leaf, a *miswak* [toothbrush/pick], and a pair of polished clogs.
> She also brought out a wooden bowl, a strong sheepskin cushion,
> A veil, but with seven patches. She laid down everything for inspection.
> The Prophet master of one and all placed the hand mill on his neck.
> Simultaneously, Abu Bakr carried the mat, 'Umar picked up the cushion, and they set out.
> Then Fatima, the light of the Prophet, went and flung the old veil on her head.
> Then she tied those clogs on her feet and next took the *mishwak* in her hand'.
>
> Usama continued: 'Then I took that bowl in my hand and set out.
> When I arrived before Haydar's room, I was unable to see people's faces because of my tears.
> The Prophet asked 'O righteous one, why are you weeping thus?'
> I answered: 'because of Zahra's poverty my soul and liver have become blood and stone.'
> The one who is master of the two worlds – behold this! His daughter's dowry!
> See what Caesar and Chrosoes possess, and what the Prophet possesses of this world!
> He told me 'O Usama, even this small amount is ample, since we must all die;
> Just as neither hand nor foot nor body nor soul will remain, these also will be obliterated'.
> Since the wedding of the Prophet's darling daughter was thus, why are you being avaricious?
> You heard the condition of the Prophet's life – still you wish to amass worldly possessions?
> Since this world's work is merely to drink your blood, why amass together what is a burden on your neck?
>
> [Attar: Ilalimina 217].

In the *Musibatnama* Attar relates another episode in Fatima's life that portrays her hard life. It comes as part of a homily.

Fatima, lady of Paradise, unexpectedly went before the master in his place of seclusion. She said:
'Blisters are made on my hand from the mill; I request from you a servant girl as gift;
so that less pain may assail me from the mill,
For how long will such pain befall me from the mill?
The mill of the sky is like grain for me, O master, is it my work to mill?'
How astonishing, in front of the master of fate
At that moment there were numerous bounties;
Though he opened his hands and bestowed them
All to others, he did not leave anything for Fatima.
He taught her a prayer, beautiful and grand, he said: 'This is better than all other things'.
Since no inheritance is left from prophets, do not prolong such deeds upon yourself'.

['A MN 40 vv 7-1114] based upon a Hadith Mish 1. 507-508.

Both stories are part of the accounts of 'Ali's and Fatima's marriage. It is seen as an important event for popular devotional writings and stories. In Shi'a tradition moreover, it is given theological meaning with Ali being the first Imam to succeed the Prophet and their descendants being the Imamate lineage. Again, both Fatima and 'Ali are popularly seen as very close to the Prophet and that a number of suitors for her had been refused. During her lifetime. 'Ali did not marry another wife.

According to a Hadith related by Jumay' ibn 'Umayr:

I went in with my paternal aunt to visit 'Aisha and asked who was dearest to God's Messenger. When she replied that it was Fatima, she was asked who was dearest among men and replied that it was her husband.

[Mish 2. 1353]

In literature, the wedding of 'Ali and Fatima was a favourite topic for *qasida* writers to include in poems that celebrated the marriages of the patron or patron's children.

Anwari wrote:

With the same destiny as with Zahra and 'Ali Murtada, you did the marriage union by good fortune from God the Helper.

[Anwari: 235, vs 23-24].

Poets have also shown the regard and affection shown by Fatima to her father. As he was dying he assured her that she would be the first to meet him in the hereafter [Mish 2. 1350; and Mus 4. 1306-1308, and Bukhari 5. 50-51 and 5. 513]. She died within those six months. However for the brief period that she lived after his death, it is alleged piously that the community often sought her out to comfort their own sorrow after his passing. Attar narrates a story of an elderly Jewish man who accepted Islam and decided to set out to meet the Prophet. When he reached Madina and found that the Prophet had died, he was devastated. The companions took him to meet Fatima to comfort him, and she gave him her father's patched cloak.

The Jew said: ' do something for me; bring me one of the Prophet's garments,
For if it was not possible to see his face, least, I may be able to smell his scent.'
....
All the companions in that sorrow and affliction,
Finally went to the Lady of Sorrows,
They narrated the whole story to her; she then said 'the Prophet said truly.
At the time when he delivered his soul to God,
With a whisper he informed me of this event –
That, 'One who loves me will come as a traveller,
But that well wiser will not see my face;
Give him this patched cloak, for it is all he wants; and with kindness greet him from me'.

When they gave him the patched cloak, he wore it; when the Prophet's scent reached him he became agitated.
Since that scent acquainted him with the truth,
He became a Muslim....

['Ail Ru 222, vs 16-224]

In Shi'ite thought Fatima represents womanhood and motherhood at its most exemplary with a miraculous birth, a divinely decreed marriage, and having been exceptionally close to her father she could not survive his death because of her grief. Sunni thought would not diverge from much of this estimation of Fatima granting her from Hadiths the title of *batul* virgin, nor in diverging from her title of 'the queen of the women of Paradise next to Maryam, daughter of Imran'. Devotion to Fatima increases with the passing of time as Islam obviously felt the need of a hagiology for women and as there were greater lacunae in her biography than for 'Aisha, Fatima's life story was consequently more open to development. Thus on the day of resurrection Fatima is shown on the same level as her father, moreover when she passes by an angel will call out 'Lower your eyes, mortals!', and the Mahdi will be born from her lineage. The real significance of Fatima however, rests upon her being the one through whom the line of the Prophet is transmitted and preserved and that she accordingly shares in the respect and veneration given to the Prophet himself.

Such devotion cannot have begun before the battle of Karbala [61/680] with its evolution coming gradually in the face of emphasis upon divine oneness, and that such a cultus could threaten the unity of the Arab empire by providing a focus for 'Alid groups. Of all the Prophet's daughters, Fatima stands out as the object of a spirituality which contrasts with any admiration or respect given to ʻAisha, her rival in life.

This lack of absolute detail of Fatima's life has also allowed the development of a cultus parallel to that surrounding the Virgin Mary in Christian traditions. In addition, it is around her that conflicting perspectives have arisen from Sunni and Shi'ite perspectives, each claiming her authority to propose a doctrine or ritual. With Shi'a involvement the Kufan school, in contrast to that of Madhina with its emphasis upon ʻAisha and Abu Bakr, exalted the status of Fatima alongside that of ʻAli, as her husband. It was resolved that by honouring his family, the Prophet was also honoured and he was released from any sense of having neglected his daughter. The Abbasid caliphs were equally to benefit from tolerating the development of devotion to Fatima and thence to ʻAli. If such respect were to be given then it was on condition that the ʻAlid line were seen as obligated to their Hashemite cousins.

2.8.5 Modern understandings of the feminine dimension.

Within Catholic expressions of Christianity, the figure of Mary, the mother of Jesus of Nazareth, is a central symbol. She is portrayed as the virginal mother of the *Logos,* through whom the world is created. As mother of a prophet and promised Messiah, Mary is recognised as well in the Qur'an as 'purified' and 'chosen above all women' by God, who has himself ordained the virginal birth of Jesus. The person of Mary therefore is a sacred historical and theological link, which addresses both Muslim and Christian traditions. Muslim tradition from the Qur'an onwards sees Mary as mother of the Messiah selected by God for this special role.

Around Mary has evolved an elaborate Catholic theology and set of understandings, which include the Immaculate Conception, the annunciation, the virginal birth of Jesus, and her assumption bodily into heaven. Although she remains subordinate to Christ in the work of redemption she is seen as an integral aspect of the universal redemption of humankind and thus the antithesis of Eve.

Believers express such devotion to Mary in ritual, festival, liturgy and personal commitment to her. Through such practices Catholic Christians perceive Mary to be a special intermediary and direct channel to God. In addition, because Mary gave birth to Jesus and is seen as being contained in God, she is often viewed within the Catholic tradition as an emanation of the will and being of God.

In the fieldwork aspect of this dissertation the focus was essentially upon the status and role of 'Ali rather than upon his wife. In the Ashura procession with the *'alams* strewn with scarves representing those taken from the women, who accompanied Husayn to Karbala there was allusion and honour given to wives and daughters in his entourage and in general [see figures: 4 *infra*]. It was evident that Fatima was held in high and uncritical respect as an exemplar of faith by the male members of the Shi'a community on this occasion. As indicated in Chapter 1., 1.9 Access, the respondents in the fieldwork were exclusively male, which is an acknowledged limitation of the research. It would have been unfeasible to gain interviews with female members of the Muslim communities in the process of this research project. Thus, responses reflected male perceptions of high estimation of Fatima and of women who emulated her attitudes and adopted *hijab*. Mernissi questions this practice [1991: 81] as 'a phobic attitude towards women' considering the Prophet's egalitarian spirit on the matter. No references were made to Mary although 'Aisha by comparison to Fatima's qualities of humility and obedience was cast in a very poor light.

The linking with the divine through Mary in Christian understandings is paralleled with the perspective of Shi'a Muslims with their relationship to the Imams. The emanating line of the Imamate ties the believers with the divine and observant Shi'is will bind themselves into this line and most personally through Fatima.

> The contentment of Fatima is my contentment, her anger is my anger. Whosoever loves my daughter Fatima loves me. Whosoever makes Fatima content makes me content. Who ever makes Fatima unhappy makes me unhappy. Fatima is part of my body. Whoever hurts her, has hurt me, and whoever hurts me has hurt God.
>
> [Shariati: 1981. 136].

Both women represent the feminine dimension in their respective central holy families; both are considered to have been conceived in remarkable and impeccable ways; both are extensions and closely linked to their sons and families. Whilst in the Christian tradition, Mary is bound to her son with little reference to her other children, Fatima is intimately allied with both her father, husband and two sons. Both Fatima and Mary are seen as conveying grace and examples of faith to Shi'a and Christian adherents alike.

In both instances the symbolism of light is significant. Fatima for example, is given the title *Zahra* 'shining one' and traditions assert that at her birth light is said to have spread over the sky and the earth, to west and to east. As such Fatima is considered to share in the *nur* 'light' of God which also filled the Prophet and 'Ali. In a parallel way, Mary is seen as showing a particular light and can be referred to in Catholic devotional manuals and the 'Hail Mary' as intercessor and helper.

As emanation involves both a complete acceptance of and a linking with another source, which is itself part of a chain of beings and consciousness, it also includes mediatorial and intercessory roles. Thus Shi'a Muslims will request Fatima's intercession because of her relationships with her father, husband and sons in the *Ahl i-Bayt*. Mary has a parallel role in expressions of Catholic spirituality:

> All that I am, all that I might be, my Lady and Queen, all that I have and hold in the order of nature as well as of grace, I have received from God through thy loving intercession; into thy sovereign hands I commit it all, that it may be returned to its noble original; wherefore we confess that thou art the channel whereby the graces of heaven descend upon us...
>
> [Christopher: 1957. 253-254].

Alongside the Prophet and the twelve Imams, Fatima is seen by the Shi'a as one of the 'Fourteen Pure Ones' or 'Fourteen Impeccables'. The role is enhanced however, as she is seen as the 'Mother of the Imams' as much as the daughter of the Prophet and wife to 'Ali. If we date Fatima as the youngest and last of the Prophet's children to survive [no sons survived infancy], Fatima has a place by which she transmits grace into the historical flow of the Muslim community.

> The final link in this chain of Divine Justice, the rightful claim of truth is Fatima, the last daughter of a family who had anticipated a son.
>
> [Shariati: 1981. 134].

In both the Catholic Christian expression and within Shi'ism is this portrayal of a strong, charismatic woman in a Holy Family. Both Mary and Fatima are seen as suffering women, whose sons will endure persecution and a martyr's death. In Shi'a thought the stories of Mary-Jesus and Fatima-Husayn become intertwined so much so that Fatima is called Maryam *al-Kubra* 'The Greater Mary', whilst Jesus is in a sense the 'brother of Husayn' [Ayoub: 1978. 35]. Neither concepts of virginal births for her children, and in particular for Hasan and Husayn, are to be found in Fatima's story nor is that of a bodily assumption for her at death. However, Fatima is often termed *al-Muhaddatha* 'the One spoken to by Angels':

> ...because angels spoke to her as to Mary, and she spoke to them; they said to her "God has chosen you and purified you; He has chosen you from among the women of the world".
>
> [Vaglieri: 1965. II. 847-848].

As noted already, both women faced suffering in their respective lives, sharing in the sufferings of their sons and families. Mary would have known the grief of John the Baptist's death as his aunt. Fatima is associated with the death of her father, and she prefigures that of Husayn at Karbala. Both women therefore are seen in the role of 'mater dolorosa' – Mary at the foot of the cross and Fatima as the 'Mistress of the House of Sorrows' becoming a tragic figure in Islamic history:

> ...who dwelt all her short life in the House of Sorrows, becoming its mistress for all time until the day of Resurrection, the day of her final vindication.
>
> [Ayoub: 1978. 48].

Her suffering carries universal significance for believers:

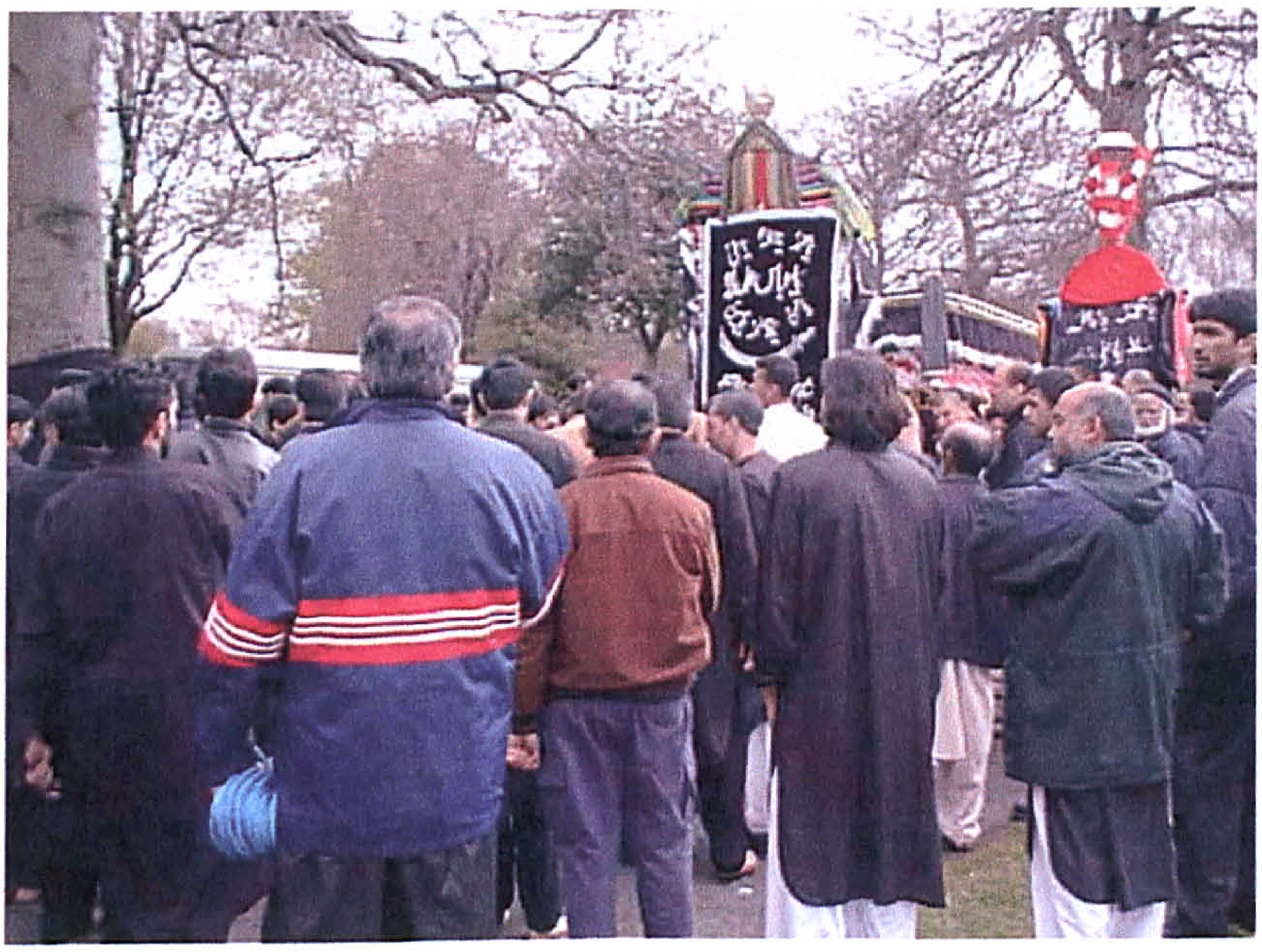
> All things weep in emulation of her tears, and the tears of the faithful here on earth are but a way of sharing in her sorrows and a means of bringing consolation to her broken heart.
>
> [Ayoub: 1978. 144].

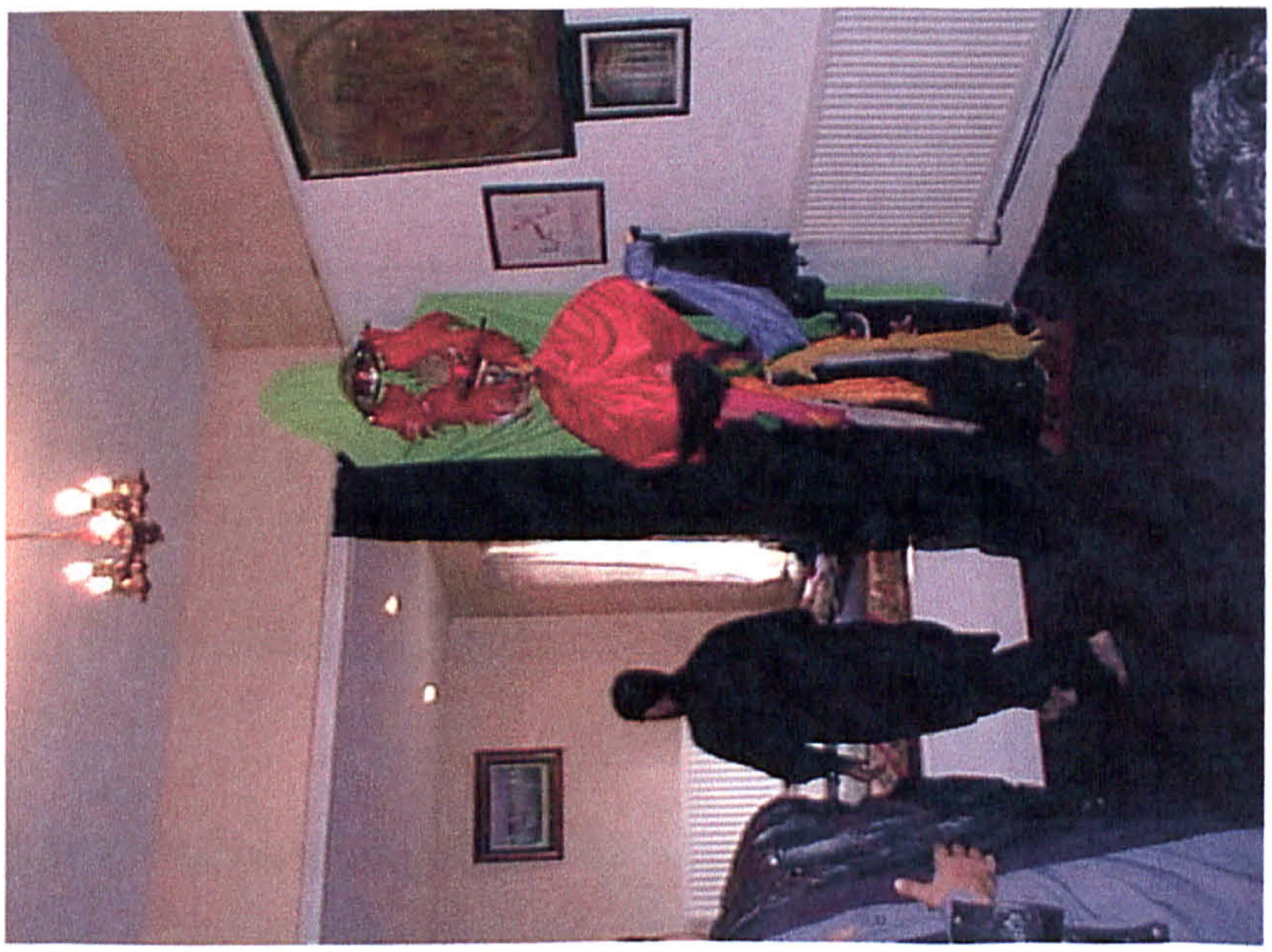
The drama of intercession is especially poignant and resonant with Fatima for the Shi'a. Within the Twelver tradition there is a strong sense that her voice will have a powerful influence on whom will enter paradise and who will be prohibited from entry on the day of resurrection in the judgement.

As an intercessor Fatima has experienced suffering but also reflects compassion and mercy notably to the outcast. As has been noted Fatima knew physical deprivation and poverty in her early and married life whilst still being shown as generous to the even poorer than herself. On such occasions she is said to have only tasted water by day and to have slept hungry at night. In contrast, in the Song of Mary [Luke 1. 46-53] Mary states that the humble and the poor will be exalted and filled with good things.

Such expressions of devotion emerge at the Ashura procession during Muharram when the standards '*alams* carried in the public rituals are bestrewn with scarves. These represent those stripped from the women who survived from Husayn's party at Karbala. The following images from the April 2000 procession in Manchester for 10th Ashura illustrate this feature of feminine devotion.

In the first three images the standards *'alams* are strewn with women's scarves representing those taken from the women who accompanied Husayn to Karbala. With their faces and modesty exposed the female followers of the Imam were doubly shamed after the defeat. This is represented and recalled in the symbols publicly paraded.





The elaborate hagiographic traditions that have grown around Fatima have inspired entire structures of popular devotional practices. In stressing a monotheistic reality to

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Chapter 3.

Sunni and Shi'a traditions in nineteenth century Northern India.

3.1 The *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* tradition.

3.1.1 The Ahl i-Sunnat [Barelwi] tradition.

With the arrival of formal British colonial rule from 1859 with the India Act, South Asian Society underwent a transformation economically, socially, politically and religiously, which resulted in the ideologisation of Islam [Findley: 1982]. The decline of Muslim political and social authority therefore was experienced much more directly in South Asia than in other parts of the Islamic world as here British colonial rule totally replaced the previous power. Colonial government in itself influenced Muslim communities in the sub-continent even further; the old political elites were affected by the British interventions whilst the introduction of democratic processes led to increasing competition between Muslim and non-Muslim sectors of society. This decline of the once established Muslim power and the corresponding rise of European influence and methods with the resulting economic, technological, educational and military superiority could only compel Muslims to question why this state of affairs had arisen as they found themselves in a subordinate position to the European/Christian world.

In effect this was a new Muslim self-statement and approach to a re-ordered public arena and political discourse. This novel pattern of relating to a changed public political order involved the re-introduction of 'independent reasoning' *ijtihad,* and a modification of the caliphal theory, which encouraged the religious elite and the newly emergent Muslim intelligentsia to share in public life in India. Into this space came reformist movements such as the *Deoband*, the more conservative *Ahl i-Hadith* and subsequently the *Jama'at i-Islami*, drawing support from emerging sections of society and their particular spiritual and political aspirations [Metcalf: 1982]. In contrast to these urban based reformist movements of the nineteenth century, Ahmad Raza Khan [1856-1921] from Bareilly established a movement which drew upon the rural constituencies of Northern India.

The ideological transformation of India in this period can be traced to the change in the economic spheres. With the advent of colonial government came a more complex pattern of labour. The new infrastructure integrated the various South Asian societies into the politically dominant British power. The government, highly modern in its approaches included in its senior levels foreign personnel, the European focused and educated intelligentsia, financial and commerce interests. At the other end of the social spectrum lay the traditional society of India, represented within the Muslim communities by the *alim,* traditional professions, the local economy, and trade constituencies. For such as these there was no division between modern production and the traditional pattern of reproduction. Yet between these two ends of the social line other groups began to form: the sectors of middle level government officials, migrant labour, the 'formally educated' skilled and unskilled workers, the religious elite, and the new graduate intellectual classes.

3.1.2 Pre and Post 1857 Reformist Movements.

The 1857 'First War of Indian Independence' or the 'Indian Mutiny' was a seminal experience for all aspects of society in India in that period. With regard to the events Hardy quotes Charles Metcalfe as indicating that against the opinion of most contemporary British observers:

> The first sparks of disaffection were kindled among the Hindu sepoys who feared attack on their caste. But the Muslims then fanned the flames of discontent and placed themselves at the head of the movement, for they saw in these religious grievances the stepping stone to political power.
>
> [Hardy: 1972. 62].

Metcalfe was a member of the British Raj administration before the 1857 uprising, with a idealised concern to maintain benevolently the traditional structure of Indian institutions [Metcalf: 1994. 25]. He saw the village communities of India as:

> ...little republics, having nearly everything that they can want within themselves, and almost independent of any foreign relations. They seem to last where nothing else lasts.
>
> [Metcalf: 1994. 70].

If the apprehensions of Indian army sepoys at cartridges being smeared with pork and beef fat were a factor in the revolt there were also deeper seated causes, which contributed to the crisis. The land reforms initiated under W.H.Sleeman since 1852 had created anxiety amongst the land owning classes, who feared dispossession; and Indian army reforms since 1804 had not opened promotion prospects for the Sepoy ranks. Even before the events of 1857 the British government in India had hesitated to sponsor Christian missionary activity and its teaching in government schools [Metcalf: 1994. 40]. Oudh was an example of a region relatively untouched by Christian missionary endeavour yet became a particular focus of the revolt. The key roots of the lengthy rebellion here were focused in land issues and loyalty to the local King [Metcalf: 1994. 46-47]. Consequently, the policy of non-intervention in religious matters was even less attractive after 1857 and the 'toleration' of the religious pluralism of India became an elevated ideal as administrations sought to avoid points of contention with the customs and beliefs of the Indian people.

Metcalf's earlier assessment includes awareness of these issues:

> The mutineers objected to the removal of Indian leaders, to attempts to reform indigenous customs, to the proselytization of Christianity, to economic policies, and to the British contempt for their Indian subjects. Other Indians remained quiet or actively supported the British. There was no single ideology...
>
> [Metcalf: 1982. 80-81].

Her research indicates considerable evidence that there were Hindus and Muslims on both sides of the conflict [Metcalf: 1982. 83], which is endorsed by Metcalf [1994 who stresses the varied reasons for opposition to the British rule [1994. 43]. Until the events of 1857 the British had demonstrated caution towards Muslim traditions in the sub-continent perceiving Islam as a hostile influence. It would only be in the later nineteenth century that such attitudes would become more ambivalent as fresh policies of conciliation were advocated by such men as W.W.Hunter and the viceroys Mayo and Northbrook [Metcalf: 1994. 141-142]. The initial result for the Muslim community however, after the 1857 uprising was to lead the *ulama* to leave Delhi for the smaller rural towns *qaśbahs* where many had their family roots, As they were less touched by the British presence and were, increasingly, the centres for preserving Muslim cultural and religious life.'

[Metcalf: 1982. 85].

This experience of the loss of influence and authority was most traumatic for the Muslims of India. As a consequence movements for the reform and renewal of Islam sprang up with some common features. Firstly, interpreting this changed world in religious terms led to a re-examination of the situation in precisely those categories. As Islam, it was held bore the final revelation, if only the *ummah* were faithful to this revelation then they would surely flourish in this life and the next. Thus the *faithfulness* of the community became an essential factor. Secondly, the final cause of the decline and suppression of their power could only be attributed to moral and spiritual failure. Reform, inner spiritual renewal, a greater *jihad* was the answer to redress the situation. Thirdly, to effect such a *jihad* the reform movements returned to the primary sources of guidance for Islam, the Qur'an and the Hadith, and sought to create afresh that earliest pristine period of the Muslim *ummah* in Medina and Mecca. Fourthly, such initiatives were led by charismatic figures who appeared in times of crisis.

The reformist/renewal movements of northern India can be separated into those who developed before 1857 and those subsequent to that year. The earlier movements took as their focus a militant opposition to the state of society and a desire to impose a *shari'ah* based Islamic model. Thus, movements of reformist and militant *jihadic* character such as the *Tariqah i-Muhammadiyah* had emerged in the circumstances of the ending of Mughal power in the sub-continent.

The *Tariqah I-Muhammadiyah* was founded under the leadership if Sayyid Ahmad Barelwi [1768-1831] of Rai Bareilly, Lucknow, who met Shah Abdul-Aziz in Delhi in 1806. Having become his disciple and following military service, Ahmad Barelwi sought to recreate a Muslim state. A Hajj to Mecca reinforced this vision and Ahmad Barelwi began to call for the removal of certain Sufi practices and shrines as not approved in the Qur'an and the sunnah. He was killed in battle against the Sikhs from the north west frontier in 1831 at Balakot. Following his death the movement split into two streams. The first maintained a *jihadic* purpose eventually dying out by the first world war. The second of a more moderate temper maintained the scholarly traditions of Shad Wali-Allah and Abdul-Aziz in Delhi.

A reformist and pacific movement by contrast, which emerged post-1857 and from a *qasbah* context - *Deoband*, received its name from the town where in 1867 two Delhi *ulama,* Muhammad Qasim Nanautwi [1833 - 1877] and Rashid Ahmad Gangohi [1829 - 1905] began a *madrassah.* Innovatory as an institution with no direct affiliation to a mosque, having a clear curriculum and an examination system, the *madrassah* became the focus of a network of schools. As a movement the *Deoband*:

> ...tolerated only a restrained Sufi practice which admitted of no hint of intercession. It required avoidance of all forms of behaviour, which might suggest the influence of either the Shi'a, the Hindu or the British world.
>
> [Robinson: 1988. 4].

Founded by Maulana Ilyas [1885 - 1944], the *Tablighi Jama'at* is an offshoot of the *Deobandi* movement albeit functioning within the parent body. A missionary movement, it is seen by Robinson as with the *Jama'at i-Islami* as:

One of the two great Islamic movements generated in twentieth century South Asia.

[Robinson: 1988. 17].

It adopted a reformist attitude with four defined practices: a missionary mindset, the acquisition and spread of Islamic knowledge, the encouragement of the good and forbidding of evil, and working together in brotherhood. Robinson affirms that the *Deoband* can be compared with forms of Protestant Christian traditions in Europe.

The *Ahl i-Hadith* movement was formed by Sayyid Nazir [d. 1902] a disciple of Sayyid Ahmad Bareilly, founder of the *Tariqah i-Muhammadiyyah.* He and his successors rejected all forms of Sufism, basing themselves upon the Qur'an, the Hadith, the four law schools, and *ijtihad.* This advocacy of a return to the earliest sources of Islam involved a seeking of the original and true meaning of the texts. There is no single scholar *alim* as in the *Deobandi* tradition to guide the adherent:

> The Ahl i-Hadis felt they had a special access to the Prophet because of their familiarity with *hadis.*
>
> [Metcalf: 1982. 272].

Opposed to all forms of institutional Sufism and the customs associated with shrines, *'urs, qawwali,* and *ziyarat,* they saw Sufism as a danger to true faith [Metcalf: 1982. 274]. Splitting off from the parent body came the *Ahl i-Qur'an,* which limited itself to the Qur'an alone as a source of authority with again no room for Sufis within its worldview.

These reformist movements were self-consciously different from the traditionally based expressions of Islam as they sought to return to the original sources and practices of the faith. Such movements were attempts less to impose Islam and *shari'ah* upon the whole of society than upon the believers themselves and to live within its boundaries [Liebeskind: 1998. 37].

3.1.3 Ahmad Raza Khan and the origins of the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at.*

By contrast in the Barelwi *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* movement one encounters a post 1857 expression of South Asian Islam, which has its roots in nineteenth century Delhi but represents resistance to reformism as well as to the presence of a colonial British government, centred on Ahmad Raza Khan of Bareilly [1856 - 1921]. His family had migrated from Afghanistan into India and had become attached to the Mughal court before settling on an estate near Bareilly in the seventeenth century [Sanyal: 1996. 51]. A descendant of scholars, Ahmad Raza established a personal reputation for learning in the field of *fiqh,* an impressive memory, and for his linguistic abilities [Jones: 1989. 70]. Subsequently, Ahmad Raza was admitted into and then became a *shaykh* of the Qadiri Sufi order, opposing those who were critical of custom focused Muslim beliefs and practices. Such critics were termed 'Wahhabi' [Jones: 1989. 70] but they were not the sole objects of Ahmad Raza's responses as he also attacked the *ulama* of the *Deobandi* and *Ahl i-Hadith* movements to whom he equally applied the same epithet. The Shi'a tradition was in addition termed *kufr* in Ahmad Raza's condemnations despite, as will be examined *infra* the parallels between his own ideals and those of the Shi'a expressions. Metcalf affirms that Ahmad Raza wished to

> ...preserve Islam unchanged not as it was idealized in texts or the historical past, but as it had evolved to the present.
>
> [Metcalf: 1982. 296-314].

Muslim movements in South Asia are essentially geographically specific [Werbner: 1996. 105]. The *Deoband* initially drew its support from the *ulama* of Delhi and North India, whilst Ahmad Raza found support amongst the Pathans from the *ulama* of Bareilly and Budaun in Rohilkhand, and from the small town and villages of the United Provinces and the Punjab region. Metcalf indicates that unlike the reformist movements, the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* offered their adherents:

> ...both the experience of participating in a purposeful oppositional group, and, as the reformist movements did not, a hierarchy of mediators ranging from the Prophet to the saints and pirs of the shrines, to the towering figure of the movement, Maulana Ahmad Riza [sic] Khan Barelwi himself.
>
> [Metcalf: 1982. 297].

Robinson states:

> He used his Hanafi legal scholarship to justify Islam as it had been handed down - a custom laden Islam which was closely tied to the Sufi world of the shrines where the believers sought the help of saints to intercede for them with God.
>
> [Robinson: 1988. 8].

He adds:

> If the *Deobandis* wanted to conserve Islam as they found it in the Hanafi law books...the Barelwis wished to conserve it as they found it in nineteenth century

> India...their relationships with the *Ahl i-Hadith* and the *Deoband*is have been ones of polemic and rivalry expressed at times in street rioting.'
>
> [Robinson: 1988. 8].

By the 1880's Ahmad Raza Khan had led the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* into a distinct identity in opposition to the reformist movements of the *Deoband* and *Ahl i-Hadith.* Similarly to them, he had formed his movement with a vision of Islam founded upon the Prophet, tracing an intellectual inheritance to Shah Wali Ullah, and drawing upon a network of Sufi families in north India. Colonial British rule created the conditions for the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* to thrive. In fact in 1870 Ahmad Raza Khan declared British India a *Dar ul Islam* [Hasan: 1997. 34]. The communications and transport systems and the models of administration and organisation that the *ulama* adapted to their own purposes were all British introductions. In addition, the British encouragement for the pre-colonial elite families to survive in the new order was significant as they in turn supported movements such as the *Ahl i-Sunnat.* Moreover, all reformist movements benefited from the colonial policy of not interfering in religious practice. Thus India under British governance was both for *Deobandi*, *Ahl i-Hadith* and Barelwi a matter of *Dar ul Islam* 'land of peace' albeit for pragmatic rather than ideological reasons. In essence the attitude of Ahmad Raza was one of taking the British presence for granted and then ignoring it.

Centred upon this one person, a posthumous biography of 1938 illustrates the esteem, in which Ahmad Raza Khan's followers held him,

> [His] exalted presence, Imam of the Ahl i-Sunnat, Renewer of the present [fourteenth Hijri] century, Strengthener...[*mu'aiyid*] of the pure *millat,* Maulana Malawi Haji, Reciter [*qari*] and Memorizer [*hafiz*] of the Qur'an, Shah Muhammad Ahmad Riza Khan Sahib Qadiri Barkati Barelwi, May his grave be hallowed...

[ud-Din Bihari: 1938].

Ahmad Raza could not be seen as the founder of the movement because it was a reviving of the original *sunnah* of the Prophet. There is no doubt however, of his centrality to a formulation and restatement by the *Ahl i-Sunnat* of the way of the Prophet in modern times.

3.1.4 Ahmad Raza Khan: distinctive theological ideas.

Ahmad Raza Khan gave coherence to the movement both intellectually, spiritually and socially. In his vision, the movement embodied true Islam and therefore identified itself as *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* 'The People of the Practice of the Prophet and the majority community' [Hussein & Kashmiri: 1995. 22] thereby claiming a predominant place over against other expressions of Islam in colonial India. The defined theological opinions, which Ahmad Raza held, motivated the oppositional and disputatious nature of much his writing and work as well as that of his followers. Debate with other Muslim groups was an intense activity especially with the *Ahl i-Hadith* but none less than with the *Deobandi* reformists with whom some common ground in Sufism and the Law Schools would have seemed to pacify relations. The confrontations and steams of *fatawa* from Raza Khan only intensified issues and assisted to strengthen the *Ahl i-Sunnat's* sense of cohesion.

3.1.5 Sufi emphases and influence.

As has been noted already, Ahmad Raza was initiated as a young man with his father into the Qadiri Sufi *tariqa* in 1877, with which order he most closely identified himself. As was and is customary however, Ahmad Raza was also an initiate into other Sufi *tariqa,* the Chishti, Naqshbandi and Suhrawardi. Ahmad states that,

> He was admitted to the *Qadiriyya Order* and was permitted to enrol and train neophytes. He had similar authority in thirteen other orders.
>
> [Ahmad: 1991. 1].

It is evident that Ahmad Raza did not enter into a close relationship with his *pir,* Shah Al-e Rasul who died in 1879. His biographer, Hasnain Riza Khan comments that Ahmad Raza was ready for initiation *bai'at* on meeting Shah Al-e Rasul without the customary forty day waiting period. As a hagiographic device it accentuates the high esteem in which Ahmad Raza would have been seen by his own disciples in time [Riza Khan: 1986. 55]. There are no references to the Shah in Ahmad Raza's own writings such as the *Malfazut-e A'la Hazrat* [Raza Khan: nd] whereas there is evidence that Ahmad Raza did maintain contact with and seek counsel from Shah Al-e Rasul's designated successor *sajjada-nishin* Nuri Miyan. The importance of the *pir-murid* relationship however is demonstrated in the manner that Ahmad Raza celebrated an annual *'urs* for the Shah on the anniversary of his death from 1905 until his own death [Sanyal: 1996. 130]. In a classic Sufi pattern, Ahmad Raza's link with the late *pir* transcended the latter's lifetime to make connection with the *silsilah* 'chain of spiritual authority' from whom the Shah Al-e Rasul had drawn. Amongst his *fatawa* Ahmad Raza responded to a question as to why a Muslim who had grown up within orthodox Sunnism and had both the Qur'an and Hadith to offer guidance should need a *pir*. The reply is that the Qur'an and Hadith contain the *shari'ah, tariqa* and 'truth' *haqiqa*. However, understanding of the *shari'ah* Ahmad Raza points out has been handed down from one generation of scholars to the next in order to instruct the faithful. If this is the case with the *shari'ah* the argument goes, then in the area of 'gnostic knowledge' *ma'rifa* a teacher *pir/murshid* is just as necessary because such knowledge cannot be deduced from the sacred texts without error unless such assistance is sought [Raza Khan: 1901. 9]. There was another purpose however, to the role of the *pir* in Raza Khan's thought. To seek for God could only be attained through the Prophet's example and way *wasila* and the means to reach the Prophet is via the *shaykhs*. By referring to Hadiths, Raza Khan considered that intermediaries were essential in seeking and meeting with God [Raza Khan: 1901. 12]. For him the central figure within the Qadiri *tariqa* Shaykh 'Abd al-Qadir Jilani [470/1077 - 561 /1166] was of utmost importance as he gave particular care to his disciples in all circumstances. Moreover the disciple could attain to intimacy with his *pir* in the experience of *fana fi'l-shaykh* 'total absorption' into him. It is arguable that Ahmad Raza perceived al-Qadiri Jilani as his true *pir* because of his *sayyid* status and descent from the Prophet, a lineage which Shah Ahl-e rasul did not bear. Ahmad Raza was clear in his instruction to his follower as to the qualities of a *pir*. He would be a Sunni of sound faith, a scholar *alim* with firm knowledge of the Law and able to interpret it by himself, from him a *silsilah* should be traceable to the Prophet himself, and he would be leading an exemplary moral life [Raza Khan: nd. 41].

For Qadiri adherents in the sub-continent Shaykh Abd al-Qadir Jilani is both founder of the *tariqa* and also a prominent 'intercessor' *shafi'i* with an eminent position in the hierarchy of saints. Padwick comments,

> If for the *Shi'a* world the *Imams* are the intercessors *par excellence*, *for* the Sunni world that place is held by a small group of saints of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to whom has been given the office of universal and accepted intercession. These are Ahmad al-Rifa'i, Ahmad al-Badawi, Ibrahim al-Dasuqi, and Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani. While the *Shafa'a* of the Prophet is his people's great hope for the life of the world to come, these four are intercessors concerning the life that now is.
>
> The manuals in our collection give only a few *awrad* of the first three, but many details concerning Abd al-Qadir al-Jilani as Succourer [*al-Gawth*] and Intercessor.
>
> The claim to a seat among the spirits of the prophets is remarkable, because entrance to that rank had been regarded as closed since the coming of Muhammad, and Abd al-Qadir could not without legal penalties have claimed it.
>
> [Padwick: 1961. 240].

Thus Ahmad Raza ranked al-Qadir al-Jilani very clearly as subordinate to the Prophet

but high in the company of the 'saints' *awliyah* of God addressing poetry to him,

Except for divinity and prophethood
You encompass all perfections, O Ghaus.

[Raza Khan: 1976. 252].

And describing his spiritual authority,

From Ahad to Ahmad, from Ahmad to you
in this order the divine command 'Be' or 'Don't Be' is
followed, O Ghaus.

[Raza Khan: 1976. 249].

Rizvi comments on the tendency within Qadiri circles,

> To all intents and purposes, the Qadiriyyas advocated the deification of their founder and all his descendants, both of the blood and spiritually. To some extent this

> developed from Shaikh Abdul 'l-Qadir's saying, "My foot is on the neck of every saint of God", which his followers interpreted as implying the superiority of the Qadiriyya Order.
>
> As a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad [through his daughter, Fatima], Shaikh Abdu'l al-Qadir was believed to have inherited every one of his ancestor's spiritual achievements. Due to such a pure Saiyid origin, mystics of Shaikh Abdu'l al-Qadir's order developed a tradition of obsessive respect for all those claiming to be Saiyids. They believed them to be immaculate beings who, with their children, deserved the most servile deference.
>
> [Rizvi: 1983. Vol 2. 52].

Al-Jilani became a 'real presence' in Ahmad Raza' s life experience both in answering prayer [Sanyal: 1996. 148] or as an example for ritual practice:

> [Ahmad Riza] first asked all those present to do wuzu' [ritual ablution] and did so himself. The container of halwa was placed in front. Everyone stood facing the direction of the Lord of Baghdad [Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir] which is eighteen degrees north of the qibla [Mecca]. Ahmad Riza directed everyone to say Bismi'llah, and to follow this up with the *durud Ghausia* [prayer calling down God's blessing on Shaikh 'Abd al-Qadir] seven times.
>
> [ud-Din Bihari: 1939. 202-203].

The Saiyid status of al-Jilani only enhanced his capacity to an intercessor for the faithful as spiritual authority rested both in the direct lineage as much as the spiritual aspect. Consequently, a Saiyid was incorporated into the ideal of the Prophet. There is also the facet inherent to Ahmad Raza's teachings and practice that he combined a 'sober' sufism with an emphasis on the importance of *shariah* practice [Rizvi: 1983. 91-94].

In defining their sources of authority and unity, all Muslim groups state that they stand on three key foundations: *Qur'an, Hadith,* and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet. More specifically on the third facet is that all Muslim streams concur in their respect for and in varying degrees their 'veneration' of the Prophet Muhammad, which in turn becomes a defining element of what actually is Islam or a particular expression. As Islam came to birth in the marketplaces and flourishing commercial towns, the Prophet exemplifies to the believer the ideal integration of faith, asceticism as appropriate, and worldly opportunity. Always aware of the Prophet's human limitations and nature, Muslims recognise him as such and not as a semi-deified figure: he is a Messenger, the Final Prophet and,

...the Beautiful Example...
[S. 33.21]

Even so a profound veneration and love for the Prophet has developed in several expressions of Islam. Such devotion can reach mystical even mythical heights and may lead some to regard his birthday *Maulid ul-Nabi,* as more significant than for example the Night of Power *Lailat ul-Qadr,* the night in Ramadan when the initial revelation of the *Qur'an* occurred. This according to the *Qur'an* itself is a night,

...better than a thousand months...
[S 97.31].

As the Prophet is the 'beautiful model' *uswa hasana,* for Muslim to follow, then to follow and imitate his *sunnah* example was and is the ideal for the devout. Thus, whilst contrasting Muslim traditions would find agreement on the example of the Prophet as crucial, some groups have so developed as alternative identities that their respect for the Prophet has granted him quasi salvific status without complete clarity on its basis in the life of the historical Muhammad. This has moulded the spirituality of generations of the faithful within Islam.

Ahmad Raza and the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa Jama'at* are clear examples of such spiritual formation in regard to the Prophet' *sunnah.* He drew upon the tradition of 'genuine Muhammad mysticism', which Schimmel places as originating in the early eighth century with the formulation of the *Nur-i Muhammadi* Light of Muhammad concept. This proposed that Muhammad was created from the light of God and preceded the actual creation of the world and thence of Adam. This is akin to the Word/Logos concept of the Fourth Gospel in the New Testament. In effect the world had been created for the Prophet [Metcalf: 1982. 301]. Thus the Prophet was himself light, present and observant in all places *hazir o nazir,* human but with a different order of humanity from that of other people. This perspective of the Prophet rests on a particular understanding and interpretation of Surah 24. 35:

> God is the Light Of the heavens and the earth. His light may be compared to a niche that enshrines a lamp, the lamp within a crystal of star-like brilliance. It is lit from a blessed olive tree neither eastern nor western. Its very oil would almost shine forth, though no fire touched it. Light upon light; God guides to His light whom He will.

'Ali ibn Abu Talib, in mainstream Sufi and Shi'ite thought, shared in this light as do the succession of the Imamate. [Schimmel: 1975. 214-215]. Al-Hallaj was to advance this understanding of the Prophet further in the tenth century affirming that the Prophet is 'both cause and goal of creation' [Schimmel: 1975. 215]. This is laid out in a particular *Hadith Qudsi,*

> If thou hadst not been, I would not have created the heavens.

[Schimmel: 1975. 215].

Both as an *alim* and as a Sufi *pir,* Ahmad Raza held similar attitudes and devotion to the Prophet with a distinct hierarchical plan of the relationship between God, the Prophet, the saints, and the faithful believers. Given that the Prophet is dependent upon God and remains a human being, the ascriptions, abilities and titles given to Muhammad are profuse.

> Only the Prophet can reach God without intermediaries. This is why, on the Day of Resurrection, all the prophets, walis, and 'ulama' will gather in the Prophet's presence and beg him to intercede for them with God...The Prophet cannot have an intermediary because he is perfect [*kamil*]. Perfection is concomitant upon [*mutafara'*] existence [wujud]; and the existence of the world is dependent upon the existence of the Prophet [which is turn is dependent upon the existence of God].
>
> [Raza Khan: nd. Vol 2, 58].

In all, Raza Khan wrote some sixteen books on the Prophet's life and composed encomia for him in Urdu verse. Such verses as these stress the intimate relationship between the Prophet and God:

The two worlds seek to please God
God seeks to please Muhammad.

Muhammad is the threshold to Allah
Allah is the threshold to Muhammad.

I will call you only 'Lord', you who are the beloved of the Lord
There is no 'yours' and 'mine' between the beloved and the lover.

[Raza Khan: 1976. 47; 9].

Although the relationship between the God and Ahmad Raza as the poet is profoundly close with little intimation of the human - divine sense of boundary, Ahmad Raza did not raise the Prophet to the same level as God. We may propose a model for understanding this quality of divine - human interrelating by the example of *Hadith Qudsi* literature,

> Outside the scriptural Revelation, God's revealing goes on, and most vividly so in the action and speech of his Messenger. In terms of religious authority, especially within the realm of personal faith and personal piety, the Qur'an and the varied materials in the Hadith form not two separate homogeneous bodies of material, but one continuum of religious truth that encompasses a heterogeneous array of materials.
>
> [Graham: 1977. 110].

Following this model of understanding the Prophet, Ahmad Raza does not distinguish between Muhammad as receptor of the Eternal Word of God, *Qur'an* and the historical Muhammad as man, the charismatic guide of his community but nonetheless human as others. In all aspects of his life, the Prophet within Ahmad Raza's perception acts prophetically and as more than a man.

From Ahmad Raza's perception, it is also clear that he held the Prophet to possess unique knowledge of the unknown *il'al ghaib.* The *Ahl i-Hadith* and *Deoband* traditions, concerned to protect the *tauhid* and sheer uniqueness of God, denied that the Prophet had this full knowledge of spiritual matters except in special circumstances and by direct revelation. By contrast the *Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at* affirm that the Prophet has this full knowledge of spiritual matters *haqiqat-i ruh, could* interpret metaphorical passages in the *Qur'an,* and knew the past and the future.

Five areas of knowledge are specifically mentioned in Surah 31. 34, which it was held were granted to the Prophet.

> God alone has the knowledge of the Hour of Doom. He sends down the abundant rain and knows what every womb contains.
> No mortal knows what he will earn tomorrow; no mortal knows where he will breathe his last. God alone is omniscient and takes cognisance of all things.
>
> [S 31. 34].

Consequently, the *Ahl i-Sunnat* feel justified in calling upon the Prophet as intercessor, the key term being the use of *Ya Rasul* [Metcalf: 1982. 301] with its intimate association with the Prophet as *wasila* mediator [Padwick: 1961. 40]. As Padwick also comments,

> ...the study of our devotions shows that Islam of to-day must be ever on her guard against what may be a tacit, though never explicit, deifying of the Prophet, whose position in these prayers is so immeasurably beyond that of humanity. The study of the Names of God and of the names of the Prophet, as used in prayer, shows how vigilant this guard must be.
>
> [Padwick: 1961. 138].

Such a valuing of the Prophet led to the high estimation of Muhammad's birthday celebration on 12th Rabi' ul-Awwal, *milad ul nabi.* Ahmad Raza's biographer, ud-Din Bihari provides an account of what is presumably a typical such annual anniversary. It would be one of only three occasions in a year when he would deliver a sermon. In fact according to ud-Din Bihari's description, two sermons were given to the elite of the district at the family ancestral home where his younger brother Maulana Hasan Raza Khan lived [ud-Din Bihari: 1938. 96-97].

The custom and practice of holding such *milad* was not without controversy in nineteenth century India.

> The *Deoband*is...tended to oppose the celebration of the Prophet's birthday, *mauludu'n-nabi,* for example, on the grounds that it encouraged the belief that a dead person was actually present; that it elevated the importance of a fixed day; and that it resembled the practices of the Hindus.
>
> [Metcalf: 1982. 150].

Apart from the very holding of such a celebration, one aspect of the day was also of particular debate. According to ud-Din Bihari, Ahmad Raza would enter the assembly at the point of *qiyam* when all in the meeting were 'standing' in recollection of the Prophet's birth and he was believed to be present [Sanyal: 1996. 160].

The *Ahl i- Hadith* movement was even stricter in their disapproval of such events. Leaders and adherents:

> ... prohibited *urs* and *qawwali,* particularly opposing the *giyarhwin* of Shaikh 'Abdu'l-Qadir Gilani...Unlike the *Deoband*is or Barelwis, the Ahl-i Hadis discouraged the institutional forms of Sufism. In their emphasis on sweeping reform, they understood Sufism itself, not just its excesses, to be a danger to true religion. They felt that Sufism encouraged the attempt to seek knowledge of the nature of God, a quest they held to be inappropriate to the believer.
>
> [Metcalf: 1982. 273-274].

In essence, the *Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at* are a Pietist-Corporate movement endorsing shrine and *pir* with a sense of continuity with an Islamic past in India which gave and gives to the movement a sense of distinct identity in the changing political context of the nineteenth century in the sub-continent. As has been indicated the status of the

Prophet is an exalted one in the thought of Ahmad Raza. Publicly never to be equated with that of God nonetheless the Prophet is more than an exemplar, more even than an intermediary, though he is all these. He is an object of devotion and because he is the bearer of the *Qur'anic* revelation as much as the Hadith *Qudsi,* Ahmad Raza saw that to love the Prophet is the supreme manner by which to demonstrate love for God.

Whereas the *Ahl-i Hadith* and *Deoband* with their distinctive emphasis that God's self-disclosure is identical with the *Qur'an,* the *Ahl-i Sunnat wa Jama'at* acknowledge alongside this belief the function of the religious 'tradition' of the ongoing community as it moves and develops from one generation to the next. For the reformists, the *Qur'an* text and strictly monitored *Hadith* control perceptions of the Prophet; for Ahmad Raza and his expression such controls are less inhibited and consequently the community of faith begins to create a character for the Prophet, less circumscribed, more exalted; less bound by history, more elaborated by human longings for the transcendent. Thus evolves the formative process by which the Prophet as object of devotion is portrayed and created by Ahmad Raza and his spiritual descendants.

3.1.6 The *Ahl-i Sunnat wa jama'at* and other Muslim traditions.

As has been already noted *supra* [see 2.1.3 – 2.1.4], Ahmad Raza Khan entered into disputations with both parallel Muslim groups and movements in late nineteenth and early twentieth century British India, as well as with representatives of the Hindu Arya Samaj movement [Sanyal: 1996. 121]. Like his contemporaries, such as Siddiq Hasan Khan of the Ahl-i Hadith [Bukhsh: nd. 181], Ahmad Raza felt profoundly pessimistic about the state of Islam in India during his lifetime and called upon his fellow Muslims to a renewal of faith. Thus, his co-religionists rather than others were seen as the cause of the decline of Islam and the Mughal political hegemony. The Aligarh movement of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan [d. 1898], the *Ahl-i Hadith*, the *Deobandi*, and most certainly the heterodox Ahmadiyyah movements become the objects of his criticism.

3.1.6.1 Relations with Sunni traditions: *zaruriyat-i din.*

Intrinsic to the ideology of the *Ahl-i Sunnat* was their understanding of the 'essentials' of the Muslim faith *zaruriyat-i din.* This embraces the foundational *shahadah* but moves into a wider perspective if in the eyes of the *Ahl-i Sunnat* one is to be considered as a 'true Muslim' rather than as *kafir,* 'unbeliever'. The differences and therefore the criteria for being recognised as authentic in faith rested crucially on the *Ahl-i Sunnat* understanding of the Prophet.

Ahmad Raza's customary method of responding to, or confronting opposing perspectives was by the issuance of *fatawa.* In 1896 he wrote such a series of legal judgements replying in effect to a number of rhetorical questions concerning contemporary Muslim groups such as the Aligarh school, the Shi'a, the Ahl-i Hadith, the *Deobandi*, and the Nadwat al-Ulama. In 1900, these *fatawa* were given additional authority with their approval by leading *ulama* of Mecca and Medina, which resulted in their publication as *Fatawa al-Haramain bi-Raif Nadwat al-Main* 'Fatawa of the Haramain [causing] the Falsehood of the Nadwa to Shudder' [Raza Khan: 1899-1900]. Citing each of the Muslim groups in turn, Ahmad Raza addressed their particular failings in relation to *zaruriyat-i din* going on to term them as guilty of *bad-*

mazhabs 'wrong or bad beliefs'; *gumrah* 'lost on the way'; or *kafirs* and *murtadds* 'apostates'.

The Aligarh movement of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan was considered to have denied the bodily existence of the angel Gabriel as well as other beings, the manifestation of miracles, and the realities of heaven and hell. If the Qur'an was accepted as true by the movement, then the *tafsir* and *hadith* were human creations. Thus, Sir Sayyid and his followers were utterly *kafir* and *murtadd* [Raza Khan: 1900. 27-28]. The *Ahl-i Hadith* movement were scrutinised and found to be guilty of innovation *bid'ati.* The *Ahl-i Hadith* were perceived to be over reliant upon the *Qur'an* and *Hadith,* rejecting *taqlid* the practice of 'imitation' of one of the four Sunni Law Schools. Being 'innovators' such a group could not possibly be *Ahl-i Sunnat* i.e. 'imitators of the way of the Prophet' as the concepts *bid'a* and *sunnah* are mutually contradictory. If not *kafir* in his eyes, then Ahmad Raza certainly saw the *Ahl-i Hadith* as *gumrah* [Raza Khan: 1900. 14]. The *fatawa* proceeded to urge *Ahl-i Sunnat* adherents not only to avoid association with *Ahl-i Hadith* and Aligarh members but also to oppose their activities and their beliefs.

A further group, which was to meet opposition from Ahmad Raza Khan, and indeed from leaders of other reformist movements, was the *Nadwat al-Ulama.* Formed in 1892 by a group of *ulama,* who had gathered at the Madrasa Faiz-i Amm, at Kanpur to attend the school's graduation proceedings. The key aims of this group were primarily to raise the academic standards of madrasa education in India and thus to provide a new generation of Muslim leaders, who would be worthy of respect both within the Muslim community and beyond by the Anglo-Indian establishment.

Opposition emerged from the movement's 1894 annual conference where the incipient divisions of Indian reformist Islam broke surface once more. An *Ahl-i Hadith* representative criticised the principle of *taqlid* and thus by implication the founders of the four law schools. In the same gathering, a Shi'a *alim* addressed the significance of the caliphate of Ali at the expense of the first three caliphs [Sanyal: 1996. 219]. Initially supportive of a council which sought to unify Muslim leadership the full weight of Raza Khan's adjudication came in the collection of *fatawa* endorsed by the Makkan and Madinan *ulama* in 1900 [Raza Khan: 1900]. This was combined with letters, posters and poetry denouncing the *Nadwa* with its tendencies to include *Ahl-i Hadith, Shi'a* and Aligarh views inimical to the *Ahl i- Sunnat.* This oppositionalist stance on the part of the *Ahl-i Sunnat wa jama'at* led to a clearer sense of boundary formation for itself, which was reinforced by the introduction of an essentially rival annual conference to the *Nadwa's* assemblies.

> The Barelwi ulama, led by Maulanas Ahmad Riza Khan, Abdu'l-Qadir Bada'uni, and Nazir Ahmad Khan Rampuri, engaged in consistent and substantial opposition, using books, posters, poetry, *fatawa,* and even a rival organisation to accuse the Nadwa of free thought and irreligion.
>
> [Metcalf: 1982. 343].

The *Deobandi ulama* however, were also to be subjected to Ahmad Raza's critique as 'leaders of heresy' and to be compared with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad [c. 1839-1908] founder of the Ahmadiyyah movement [Raza Khan: 1905-6. 10]. In this *fatwa Deobandi ulama* such as Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, Muhammad Qasim Nanatauwi, Ashraf Ali Thanawi, and Khalid Ahmad Ambethwi were to be termed *wahhabi,* a common term used in *Ahl-i Sunnat* writings against both *Deoband* and Ahl-i Hadith groups from this time [Roff: 1987. 31-52; Voll: 1975: 32-39 & 1982. 61]. The principal difference between Ahmad Raza Khan and the *Deobandi ulama* as much as with other Sunni traditions lay in his understanding of the Prophet's personhood and role. Such an understanding for Raza Khan determined the criteria of Muslim 'orthodoxy'. For *Ahl-i Sunnat* adherents the Prophet Muhammad was absolutely the 'Final Prophet' but Ahmad Raza detected in the writings and statements of such *ulama* as Maulana Qasim Nanautwi [1833-1879], a founder of the Dar al-Ulum at *Deoband,* denial of such a proposition [Friedmann: 1989. 78] [Raza Khan: 1900. 14]. A second dimension of these criteria of orthodoxy lay in acknowledgement that the Prophet held knowledge of the unseen *ilm-i ghaib.* Ahmad Raza devoted other *fatawa* to this theme both defending his position and accusing two *Deobandi ulama,* Khalil Ahmad Ambethwi and Asraf Ali Thanawi for failing to accept such beliefs [Raza Khan: nd. & 1905-06. 18]. With the range of sources that Raza Khan uses on this issue it is clear that it was a singularly important matter. The key *Qur'anic* text was deployed:

> He alone has knowledge of what is hidden: His secrets He reveals to none, except to the apostles whom He has chosen. He sends down guardians who walk before them and behind them, that He may ascertain if they have indeed delivered the messages of their Lord.
>
> [S. 72. 26-27].

For Ahmad Raza the Prophet Muhammad was undoubtedly one of the 'apostles' mentioned and therefore had clear knowledge of the secrets of God. Denial of this perspective put proponents into the rank of *kafir* or *murtadd* for Ahmad Raza and therefore apostate from genuine Islam. *Deobandi* scholars were consequently grouped with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad as followers of Satan the arch-liar and deceiver [Raza Khan: 1905-06. 14-16].

The *Deobandi ulama* were far from passive in these interactions between the movements as they in turn issued *fatawa* of their own and equally sought endorsement from other *ulama* to acknowledge their orthodoxy. They too were vigorously engaged in the struggle against the emergent Ahmadiyya movement and were determined that their credentials as *Ahl-i Sunnat wa jama'at* would be accepted.

> The *ulama* of *Deoband* prided themselves [and still pride themselves] on being *Ahl al-sunna wa'l jama'a* [people of the practice of the Prophet and of the community], accepting the authority of the four orthodox *Sunni mazahib,* opposed to the *Ahl-I Hadith,* to the ulama of the Bareilly school - not to be confused with the followers of Saiyid Ahmad of Rai Bareilly - with their acceptance of the intercession of saints and worship at tombs and their ascription of semi-divine qualities to the Prophet - to the teaching of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan, to the *Shi'a* and to the Ahmadiyya.
>
> [Hardy: 1972. 170-171].

3.1.6.2 Relations with the Twelver Shi'a tradition.

The differences between Ahmad Raza Khan and the *Ahl i- Sunnat wa jama'at* with the Shi'a are not generally different from the difficulties that other Sunni would have with the Shi'a traditions [Hasan: 1997. 8-9]. In one perspective, Raza Khan would have been expected to have sympathies with the Shi'is particularly, for example, on their high estimation of the Prophet and his family. However, it is clear that Shi'a were judged on a spectrum of 'extremist' views - at one end there would be the *Tafzili Shi'a,* who were simply bad *mazhabs* [Liebeskind: 1998. 53 & 254]. At the other end of the spectrum were the majority of Shi'a, whom Ahmad Raza considered to be *kufr* for one or more reasons [ud-Din Bihari: 1938. 189-190] such as their view that the *Qur'an* was alleged to be defective; that 'Ali and the Imams were superior to the non-legislating prophets, and the rejection of the first three of the 'rightly guided caliphs' prior to Ali. For Ahmad Raza certainly, belief in the utter veracity of the *Qur'an,* that the prophets were above the Imams in spiritual status, and that the first three caliphs were duly and properly chosen, were aspects of *zaruriyat -i din* and to reject them rendered the Shi'a to the level of *kufir* and *murtadd* [Raza Khan: 1905-06. 31-33].

On the matter of Shi'a ritual such as the public aspects Muharram with the *alams* 'standards', *taziyas* 'replicas of the tombs of Imam Husayn' and the evocation of grief over Husayn's death *shahadat-namas,* Ahmad Raza was more eirenic towards the Shi'a. Even the re-enactment on 10th Ashura of the death of Husayn at the battle of Karbala was not a contentious matter with him. In the opinion of Ahmad Raza such practices were akin to keeping a symbolic picture of the Ka'aba or the Prophet's *masjid* Medina. Such objects were inanimate and there was no restriction within Islam to keeping such objects [Raza Khan: 1903-04. 74] and as such they were sources of *baraka* blessing or grace to the believer.

However, Raza Khan returned to the theme of innovation *bi'da* on several features of Shi'a practices: the display of grief in the Ashura processions with *mat'am* 'chest beating and self-flagellation, where men and women mingled, and when it occurred, bowing towards the replica of the tomb, were considered undesirable. In essence, Ahmad Raza displayed considerable caution in his comments about the Shi'a rites and public displays of devotion – an action might be avoided because the practitioner might lack the 'right intention' *niyya* whereas if the intention were sound then the activity would be considered acceptable before God [Raza Khan: 1903-04. 86].

This ambivalence on Ahmad Raza's part towards the Shi'a led to some consideration that he was covertly a Shi'a [Zaheer: 1986. 42-46]. Sanyal dismisses such views whilst acknowledging that in eighteenth and nineteenth century India inter-marriage occurred between families of Sunni and Shi'a affiliations [Sanyal: 1996. 213]. However, it must be accepted that Ahmad Raza's ideas did bear resemblance to classic Shi'a perspectives for example, upon the Prophet and the grace transmitted through his genealogical line. In addition Raza Khan held as highly significant another understanding shared with Twelver Shi'a, that the Prophet's light pre-dated the creation of the material and spiritual universes and Adam. Both the Prophet and 'Ali also pre-existed Adam with their light being the source of origin for all other beings. Momem cites Shi'a tradition on this issue:

> Muhammad, Fatimah and the Imams are conceived in their mystical dimension as being a light that God created before the creation of the material world. This light then became the cause and instrument of all the rest of creation. The following Tradition is attributed to the Prophet: 'God created Ali and me from one light before the creation of Adam...then He split [the light] into two halves, then He created [all] things from my light and Ali's light.'
>
> The First Imam, Ali is reported to have said: 'God is one; He was alone in His singleness and so He spoke one word and it became light and He created from that light Muhammad and He created me and my descendants [i.e. the other Imams], then He spoke another word and it became a Spirit and He caused it to settle upon that light and He caused it to settle on our bodies. And so we are the Spirit of God and His Word...and this was before He created the Creation'.
>
> [Momem: 1985. 148-149].

Rubin cites another Shi'a tradition which includes Fatimah, the Prophet's daughter and 'Ali's wife as an inheritor of this divine light:

> 'When Allah created paradise' says a [Shi'i] tradition, 'He created it from the light of His face. Then He took the light and dispersed it. One third hit Muhammad, one third hit Fatimah, and another third hit Ali. All the people this light reached found the right path of loyalty to Muhammad's family; those who missed it – went astray.
>
> [Rubin: 1975. 65-66].

Ahmad Raza held totally similar views to the Shi'a on the succession of the divine light to the Prophet through a line of pure ancestors, who could not have been *kafir* [Raza Khan: 1897-98. 5ff]. A *hadith* of 'Ali, which asserted that there had always been at least seven Muslims on earth at any one time amongst whom had been Muhammad's progenitors supported this opinion [Raza Khan: 1897-98. 3-4]. Confirming argument however, was provided by the Qur'anic verse in which Muhammad is encouraged to put his trust in the 'worshippers' *sajidin* [Rubin: 1975. 77].

> Put your trust in the Mighty One, the Merciful, who observes you when you stand upright and when you walk among the worshippers. He alone hears all and knows all.
>
> [S 26. 219]

The commonality of usage of such Hadith and indeed Qur'anic passages by contrasting traditions, who were often in dispute and conflict with one another indicates support for the view that sacred text can be used and created to endorse perspectives in rivalry with one another.

The parallels between Shi'a mainstream thought and the ideas of Raza Khan can be taken further on this matter of the *Nur Muhammadi.* Rubin for example describes Shi'a belief as holding that:

> The prophetic blaze itself, serves as a source of blessing for the whole community of its carrier. This aspect is fully expressed in the traditions about the blaze of 'Abd al-Muttalib. These traditions obviously Shi'i inspired, present the prophet's grandfather as a praiseworthy leader, communicating between Quraysh and Providence. It is related in the *Ithbat* that with the light of Muhammad blazing on his forehead, 'Abd al-Muttalib managed to bring down rain on Mecca after a period of heavy drought.
>
> An outstanding feature of the *ithbat* traditions about the wandering of Muhammad's substantial light, is the stress laid on its forming part of a Divine design aimed at Muhammad's prophetic emergence at a predestined time and place. Above all, it is stated that the entire world was created for this purpose only. Allah revealed to Adam that Muhammad was the only cause for his own creation, as well as for the creation of heaven, earth, paradise and hell...
>
> [Rubin: 1975. 94-95].

Such a high conceptualisation and understanding of the Prophet resonates in Ahmad Raza's writings and in the subsequent *Ahl i- Sunnat wa jama'at* tradition's publications.

> The world gets its life from you [Muhammad]
>
> Because of you the world came into being
> The real is bound to its shadow
> Upon you be thousands of blessings.
>
> [Raza Khan: 1976. 374].

And from a contemporary writer within the *Ahl-i Sunnat wa jama'at* tradition, the Prophet is:

> ....sinless and perfect.....

[Qureishi: 1993. 9].

There are other doctrinal parallels between the two streams on the question that the Prophet and the Imams according to Shi'a belief were said not to cast shadows :

> ...a Shi'i tradition states that Allah uttered a word that became light. He created Muhammad from that light; then he created 'Ali and his descendants; then, Allah uttered another word that became spirit. He infused this light into the former light, and infused [the joint light] into their [corporeal] bodies. Likewise, Muhammad is reported to have stated: 'Allah has created me from light, and He created that light a thousand years before Adam'. Muhammad and the Imams, created from the divine light, were believed not to cast shadows. This divine light, Allah's first creation, serving as a source for further creations, is identified with the pre-existent light of Muhammad.

[Rubin: 1975. 112]

Ahmad Raza argues in a similar vein based on his acceptance that as the Prophet was created of light he could not shed a shadow [Raza Khan: 1985].

3.1.7 Derivations or Separate Developments?

Undoubtedly, there are several similarities of understanding on the place and status of the Prophet between Ahmad Raza and Twelver Shi'a perspectives. However, as tempting as the proposition would be to find derivations form one tradition to another there are significant differences to be examined. There is also the clear antipathy held by Ahmad Raza and the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* adherents then and subsequently. Ahmad Raza was insistent, as can be seen from the disputations he entered into with other Muslim movements of the time, that the *Ahl i- Sunnat wa jama'at* were the authentic 'people of the Prophet's way' with others deficient in some measure.

Firstly, whilst the Shi'a understanding of the *Nur Muhammadi* includes the belief that the light is transmitted from him through 'Ali to the line of the Imams:

> It is related that before his death, Muhammad transmitted to Ali his divine light, together with the rest of the heritage that was handed down to him through the preceding prophets.
>
> [Rubin: 1975. 108].

Ahmad Raza did not hold this view. In his estimation, the Prophet's spiritual successors were to be found in the Sufi *silsilah* of *ghaus* 'helpers' or the *auliyah* 'saints', who culminated in Shaykh Abd al-Qadir Jilani. The light belonged to the Prophet alone albeit the *baraka* 'blessing' was given to the helpers and saints. Again, that Muhammad had no shadow was his privilege alone and did not belong to the Imamate. The parallels and common features of belief between the Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat* and the Twelver Shi'a emerge from the commonality of their devotion to the Prophet and similar patterns of Qur'anic interpretation. The Prophet and his family are equally central to the thought of Ahmad Raza and Shi'a scholarship but their similar positions are attained by different pathways. Invariably, Ahmad Raza used distinctively Sunni sources of Hadith *isnad* rather than Shi'a evidence to undergird an opinion. When addressing the matter of the Prophet's light, Ahmad Raza used a wide range of Sunni authorities such as the Shafi'i law school scholar, Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Qastallani [d. 1517], and from the Indian Mughal period, Abd ul-

Haqq Dehlawi [d. 1642], Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti [d. 1505] from the Egyptian Mamluk period, al-Tirmidhi [d. 892] the Hadith scholar, ibn al-Jauzi, and Abd ul-Aziz Dehlawi. Even when he is arguing that 'Ali had been a Muslim from the earliest stage of his life, Ahmad Raza took his case from Sunni sources in the Ashari and Maturidi schools [Raza Khan: 1894-95. 40].

There are discernible parallels and similarities between the *Ahl i- Sunnat* and Shi'a understandings on several key doctrines and Qur'anic interpretation for example, concerning Prophetology and the transmission of spiritual knowledge. For Ahmad Raza however, sources were essentially Sunni – *fiqh, hadiths,* and *fatawa.* As has been seen *supra,* Ahmad Raza perceived the Shi'a of his day to be *kafir* and even in a relatively mild form to be extremist *ghulat* on the matters of true faith and the criteria of what embraces true adherence to Islam.

Chapter 3.

Sunni and Shi'a traditions in nineteenth century Northern India.

3.2 The Shi'a tradition.

3.2.1 Introduction.

Both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the Shi'a tradition in South Asia has been highly diverse in nature. In understanding the development of Shi'ism within the sub-continent there are particular factors to be noted.

Throughout its history, the Shi'a have formed a minority comprising some 10% of the Muslim population of the region, which in itself is a minority of 11% of the Indian population. [Momem: 1985. 277 & Zakaria: 1989. 396-397]. In addition, the whole Muslim tradition in pre-partition India and since affirms a definite monotheistic doctrinal position with *tauhid*, which appears to contradict the pluralism innate to the majority Hindu traditions. There is however, a further factor, which marks out the Indian religious environment as 'a facility to accommodate a vast range of diverse and contradictory elements' [Maloney: 1974. 158]. Consequently, however sharply the leaders of a religious tradition might seek to demarcate the boundaries between contrasting faith communities at a popular level, there is considerable intermingling of customs and participation in festivals and rituals. The Muharram ceremonies for example, host Hindu devotees as much as Shi'ite people. The shrines of Sufi *pirs* attract a diverse set of pilgrims and adherents at the times of *'urs* celebrations [Cole: 1988]. 117]. Accordingly, there is a distinctive place for doctrinal and confessional statements, which form a religious consensus for a minority tradition, let alone the wider Muslim Indian community, alongside a capacity to embrace religious differentiation in society. Thus, whilst the Shi'a have engaged in polemics and controversy with Sunni groups and Hindu revivalist movements, there is also a readiness for accommodation and acquiescence in the situation.

3.2.2 Shi'ism in pre-modern South Asia.

Hasnain and Husain [1988. 195-200] argue that the links between the nascent Shi'a tradition and the sub-continent extend back to Karbala in 61/680 itself. These writers quote traditions that reflect Husayn's wish to migrate and settle in India as a refuge and that his wife Shahrbanu was related to the ruler Chandra Gupta. They also affirm that as early as the seventh and eighth centuries individual Shi'a found haven in India from the persecutions of both the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties [Nasnain and Husain: 1988. 195-200].

The actual presence of Shi'a communities in South Asia however, dates in actuality from the late tenth century when Isma'ili missionaries entered and established a power base in Sind, with Multan as the focus of their rule from 985. This created a link with the Fatimid dynasty in Cairo with the name of the Fatimid caliph being invoked in the Friday *khutbah,* and coins being minted with his insignia. Within some twenty years however, this Isma'li sphere was overwhelmed in 1005 by Mahmud

Shazna [999 - 1030]. The political power of the Isma'lis was lost but Isma'ilism survived when the Sumra, a local dynasty with Hindu roots, adopted the faith. It had no further contact however, with the Fatimid homeland and mission.

3.2.3 The Bohra tradition.

The Bohra [from Gujurati *vohra,* 'trader'] expression finds its origins in the eleventh century with the arrival of an Isma'ili missionary, 'Abd Allah in 1067/460 from the Yemen at Cambey, Gujerat. This contact developed into the administration of the region by *da'is,* missionaries sent from the Fatimid Court in Egypt. The Fatimid rule was divided after the death of caliph Mustansir in 1094 with one group following the older son, Nizar and another group the younger son, Mustal'li as the *Imam.* The Mustal'lian stream held that the younger son's grandson Abu'l-Qasim Tayyib entered concealment in 1142, a pattern akin to the Twelfth Imam of the Twelver Shi'a, with the first Queen Hurra of the Yemen as his representative. From this time the Mustal'ians, known in India as the Bohras, accepted the 'missionary teacher' of the Tayyibi Ismai'li tradition as their highest spiritual authority [Daftary: 1998. 3-5; 185-193].

The key concept for the Bohra community is the recognition of the *Mulla ji Sahib* or the *Sayyidna* as the representative of God on earth and is thus regarded as *ma'sum,* infallible and impeccable. The Bohra adhere to Fatimid beliefs, with their law being based on Qadi Nu'man's *Da'a'im al-Islam.* Until the fifteenth century the community expanded and benefited from large-scale conversions [Schimmel: 1980. 71].

Schisms began to occur in the mid fifteenth century when one Ja'far Patani reverted to the Sunni faith creating a 'Sunni Bohra' grouping. A second division followed when the *da'i Sayyidna* Yusuf bin Sulaiman [d. 1567] settled in Sidhpur from the Yemen and attracted followers from the Bohra community forming the *Sulaimani* Bohras. A minority remnant, the *Da'udi* faction, remained faithful to the *da'i* in the Yemen. Subsequent splits happened in 1765, and in 1897 with a small group separating in the Nagpur area with a leader claiming to have direct contact with the *Imam.* This group continues as an isolated community into the present.

The Bohras with their affinity to the main Shi'a tradition might have expected some immunity from persecution but under Aurangzeb they came under pressure and reverted to *taqiyya* for survival. Within Ahmadabad there are some eight tombs of *da'is* and in Surat there are seven all of which are objects of pilgrimage by Bohra people [Lokhandwalla: 1955. 135].

Maintaining a strong identity by avoiding inter-marriage with other Muslim streams, an apolitical stance, and the formation of business guilds the Bohras have created prosperous and well-organised communities [Lokhandwalla: 1955. 117-135].

3.2.4 The Khoja tradition.

The origins of the Nizari Isma'lis or Khojas in South Asia are complex to trace as they maintained a less visible profile than other Muslim traditions before the migration of the Aga Khan I Hasan Ali Shah from Persia to India in 1840 [Nanji: 1978 and Algar: 1969. 55-81].

The term 'Khoja' until the nineteenth century was not primarily a religious identification but referred to a caste designation of minor traders, which adhered to an amorphous blend of Hindu and Muslim beliefs [Masselos: 1973. 1-20]. Originally members of the Hindu *Lohana* jati, the Khojas embraced Islam during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries under the missionary influence of *da'is* sent to India by Nizari Ismai'li Imams resident in Iran [Nanji: 1978]. In the community's tradition one of these *da'is* Pir Sadr ad-Din gave the title *Khoja* signifying 'Lord' or 'Master' to the new converts. This replaced the Hindu 'Lohana' title *thakur* or *thakkur,* which also indicated 'Lord' or 'master' and was meant to confer a replacement identity upon the former caste status and relationships in a predominantly Hindu society. It is therefore reasonable to assume that the conversions amongst the Khojas were a mass movement rather than a process of individual acceptance of Islam.

In their missionary work amongst the Lohana people, the Iranian *pirs* took an approach, which involved the presentation of Islam in a form understandable to their audience. The evidence suggests that the Khojas were originally Vaisnavite devotees of Rama and Krishna, with the cult of Shakti amongst their beliefs [Mallison: 1989. 93-103]. As Vaisnavites, they accepted the ten *avataras* of Vishnu maintaining that nine of these 'incarnations' had already occurred in this world. They would have been waiting upon the tenth and final *avatara* of *Kalki* [Klostermaier: 1994. 127]. The *pirs* composed in the local languages a new literary genre, the *ginans,* composed of devotional songs and poetry through which the conversion of the people was moved forward. Through this means the *pirs* presented themselves as guides, who knew the identity of the tenth *avatara* of Vishnu and remoulded these basic Hindu figures into Muslim forms. Thus the tenth incarnation was renamed as *Nakalanki,* 'the stainless one' and identified with Imam 'Ali [Nanji: 1978. 110-120], Brahma was identified with the Prophet Muhammad, whilst Fatima was connected with Shakti and Saraswati, who is seen in Hindu understanding as the daughter of Brahma. A distinction must be noted however, that unlike Saraswati, Fatima is not connected with learning and music. The Nizari Isma'ili *da'is* therefore in India presented Islam as the fulfilment of the Hindu tradition whilst in the Middle East Islam had been offered as the completion of the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

By the nineteenth century the Khoja religious identity was according to historical evidence an ill-defined mixture:

> A unique blend of Hindu and Muslim, as well as Shi'a and Sunni customs and beliefs.
>
> [Masselos: 1973. 6].

The devotion shown to 'Ali, observance of the ceremonies of Muharram, and the three times daily *salat* prayer, placed them amongst the Shi'a but their acknowledgement of the Isma'ili Imam in Iran placed them amongst that stream. With the advent of British rule in India and the consequent redefining of Muslim boundaries and self-understanding, the Khojas amongst other Muslim expressions found it essential to present themselves in terms of the foundational and universal concepts of Islam. A further factor was the migration and settlement of the Ismai'li Imam, Aga Khan I [d. 1881] in Bombay in 1845 from Iran. Hitherto the Khojas had been somewhat distant if loyal adherents of the living Imam but now found that with his presence in the sub-continent he began to develop a first hand authority over the community. This led to secessions from the tradition as in 1866 the Bombay High Court affirmed the Aga Khan's authority and defined the Khoja's identity in law [Hollister: 1979. 369-370]:

> A sect of people whose ancestors were Hindu in origin, which was converted to and has throughout abided in the faith of the Shi'a Imami Ismai'lis, and which has always been and still is bound by ties of spiritual allegiance to the hereditary Imam of the Ismai'lis.
>
> [Hart: 1907. XII, 363c].

A dissenting group moved into orthodox Sunnis, which led to a clearer definition of the remaining Khoja loyalties to the Aga Khan. A further schism occurred in the early twentieth century during the leadership of Aga Khan III [1877/1294 - 1957/1376] with a group maintaining that the Khojas were in fact *Ithna 'Ashari Shi'a by* faith. In 1908 the Bombay High Court reaffirmed the Aga Khan's role as Imam of the Khoja Nizari Ismai'lis with a secessionist group joining the Twelver Shi'a tradition. At this time the Aga Khan withheld his followers from participating in Muharram mourning ceremonies on the basis that they had no reason to grieve as they had a 'living Imam'. This further defined the Khoja Nizari Ismai'lis expression with its part in Imami Shi'a Islam from other Shi'a streams in India and in East Africa. Under the guidance of Aga Khan III and his interest in the socio-political affairs of Indian Muslims, the community took a more prominent role in sub-continent public life. Following the partition of India in 1947, many of the Khoja community migrated from the Gujerat and Bombay areas of India to newly established Pakistan.

3.2.5 The Twelver Shi'a tradition.

The Twelver Shi'a tradition entered the sub-continent comparatively later than the Sunni expressions and then the Ismai'li Shi'a streams of Islam. Its history is divided into several periods as official Shi'a Kingdoms were established usually influenced by the Safavid model in Iran.

Initially, Shi'ite political power was established on a firm basis within the south central region of the Deccan. During the fourteenth century Hasan Gangu [r. 1347-1358] created the Bahmani Kingdom having seized upon the weakness of the northern state to consolidate the Deccan conquests begun from the Delhi sultanate by Muhammad ibn Tughlaq [r. 1325-1351]. There is a folkloric tradition surrounding Hasan Gangu, which focuses upon the naming of the Bahmani kingdom and reveals the mingling of Iranian and Hindu cultural streams in the Indian context. One legend recounts how Hasan as a noble but impoverished man of Iranian ancestry confronted his circumstances. Falling asleep one day beneath a tree, he was seen by a passing Brahmin priest, who was amazed to notice that behind the sleeping Hasan was a coiled and alert cobra guarding the man. The scene revealed a truly Hindu picture recalling the sleeping Vishnu depicted as resting beneath the outspread hood of a cobra. The priest waited until Hasan woke and in telling him of the picture offered to become his servant, with the proviso that Hasan should add the priest's title to his own name. This was agreed and when Hasan became the ruler of a kingdom he gave it the name 'Bahmani', a supposed corruption of 'Brahmin'. A second narrative says that Hasan claimed to be descended from the ancient Sassanid ruler of Iran, Bahman son of Isfandiyar, and for this reason took the title of Bahman ibn Shah and called his kingdom Bahmani [Hollister: 1989. 103].

In the early sixteenth century the Bahmani rule dissolved into individual autonomous sub-states, one of which the Qutb Shahi dynasty of Golconda founded Hyderabad in 1591. This line created Shi'a shrines and sponsored the public Muharram processions within the city whilst also responding to positive overtures from the Safavid rulers in Iran. This alliance was designed from the Safavid perspective to counter the Sunni orientated Mughal kingdom in northern India but it also provided the Mughals with a pretext to invade the Deccan. In the next century Aurangzeb, as viceroy of the Deccan referred to the Qutb Shahi ruler, Qutb ul-Mulk as:

> '...a godless wretch, ungrateful for royal favours, sunk in vices unworthy of a king, a violator of the purity of his subjects' homes, an oppressor against whom the people were invoking the heavens, a heretic who had perverted all his subjects from the pure Sunni faith, and lastly an ally and financial supporter of the King of Persia. Not to punish such a heretical ruler would be failure of duty on the part of an orthodox Islamic emperor.'

[Hollister: 1979. 124].

Although Aurangzeb's campaigns cut the ties with the Safavid Shi'ite Iran, it did not suppress the Shi'a cultural and spiritual influences on Hyderabad and the Deccan region. Muharram observances continued without inter-communal conflict through the nineteenth century and indeed into the modern period [Chelkowski: 1979. 223-224]. A major factor for this peaceful co-existence was the status of Hyderabad as an autonomous 'princely state' and the Qutb Shahi practice of using the Muharram rituals to create a commonality of feeling and ethos amongst the diverse Deccan peoples. Consequently, the ceremonies reveal features of both Shi'a, Sunni, and Hindu pieties.

> There persists in Hyderabad, despite occasional outbreaks of violence, a long-standing tradition for the relatively peaceful celebration of Muharram, in which numerous faiths participate and the government acts as sponsor and guarantor of security.
>
> [Pinnault: 1992. 158].

Although the Qutb Shahi state was annexed by Aurangzeb in 1687, the succeeding client dynasty of the Asaf Jahi eventually in turn asserted its independence. During the British rule of the nineteenth century this regime was recognised and Hyderabad remained a sovereign realm until it was forcibly incorporated into post 1947 independent India. Throughout their period of power the Sunni Asaf Jahi nizams [the last nizam was rumoured to have embraced Shi'ism] [Pinnault: 1992. 158] maintained the practice of sponsoring the Muharram processions and rituals even though the majority of the population was Hindu. This practice continued into the twentieth century and the independence era with Muharram never having been identified with but one section of the community and so allowing an inter-communal observance and reading of the elements of the ceremonies.

As the adoption of Twelver Shi'ism by the Safavid dynasty in Iran during the sixteenth century provided a seedbed for this stream of Shi'ism to infiltrate India and a resulting interplay with the Mughal dynasty. This relationship began during the period of exile in Iran of the Mughal ruler Humayun [1530–1556]. He embraced Twelver Shi'ism, perhaps out of a desire to secure the military assistance of the

Safavid Shah Tahmasp [1524-1576] but it led to him bringing Iranian scholars, officials and troops back to Delhi on his resumption of power. [Schimmel: 1980. 77]. Amongst this entourage were key people, who were to influence the development of Islam in India. Bayram Khan, guardian of Humayun's son Akhbar [1556 – 1605] was possibly a Twelver Shi'a adherent as was Shaykh Gada'i, who acted as *Sadr al-Sudur*, the highest religious office in the state. Nur Jahan, the wife of Jahangir [1605–1627] was a Shi'a of Iranian descent, as were her father and brother, who both held important positions. The rule of Humayun's son, Akhbar [r. 1556 – 1605] and his immediate descendants was period of tolerance, prosperity and influence for Shi'ism with migrations from Iran into the region. Shi'ites benefited from the eclectic religious atmosphere of Akhbar's court and its *din-i ilahi* 'divine religion' although Akhbar himself may not have favoured Shi'ism personally [Schimmel: 1980. 82]. Shi'a as individuals therefore had access to considerable power during this part of Mughal period, which caused Sunni factions to feel threatened exacerbating acrimony between the two streams, which continues until the present day.

The tolerance ended with the assumption of power by Aurangzeb [r. 1658–1707] who, motivated by Sunni orthodoxy, declared Shi'a rituals within the Mughal realms as illegal and as noted *supra* set about the subjugation of the Qutb Shahi state. However, as the centralised Mughal power declined in the eighteenth century, the Shi'a dominated Awadh [Oudh] province began to find a measure of autonomy.

3.2.6 The Shi'a state of Awadh [Oudh] – Uttar Pradesh.

With the decline of Mughal centralised power and the repeated military thrusts of the Iranian ruler Nader Shah [1736-1747], the opportunity was created for the formation of a Shi'a state in northern India between Delhi and Varanasi, with Lucknow as its capital. The *nawabs* of Awadh were Iranian by origin from Khorasan, the Nishapuri who initially served as governors of the province before exercising their power with their followers as the political and administrative elite to distance themselves from Delhi. Lucknow effectively became the *Dar ash-shi'a* 'Home of Shi'ism', and with considerable expenditure it drew craftsmen and workers from all over India to enhance its public buildings. By 1791 an *Imambarah* the equivalent of the Iranian *Husayniyyah* was completed for the holding of Muharram mourning rituals. Cole cites the Italian traveller, the Viscomte Valentia, recording that the *Imambarah* during the month of Muharram was illuminated with candles whilst,

> ...every evening all unbelievers and followers of Omar, Othman, and Abu Bakr were anathematised, to the edification of the Hindoos, who on this occasion, crowded there in great numbers.
>
> [Cole: 1988. 96].

The creation of a specifically Shi'a ethos within the city and its province was developed in two public ways – by sponsoring the public Muharram rituals in the capital city of Lucknow, and by the employment of *'ulama* of the Usuli School, who had been trained in Iraq and Iran. Initially, as Cole demonstrates, the Muharram rituals were eirenic experiences of intra-faith co-operation in Lucknow, as in Hyderabad before politics became communally based in the later nineteenth and then in the twentieth centuries:

> …presenting no less terrible an aspect widespread, though not universal, Sunni and Hindu participation made Muharram rites trans-communal. Sunnis in Awadh genuinely loved and supported Husayn, and the tears they shed for the Prophet's grandson helped soften hard-line Shi's attitudes toward them. Hindus commemorated Muharram as well, adopting Husayn as a god of death, his bloodstained horse and his severed head lifted aloft on Umayyad staves as Kali Durga with her necklace of skulls.
>
> [Cole: 1988. 117].

The basis for this atmosphere in northern India, which was to change so significantly but not to disappear in subsequent years, lies in the relationship between religious belief and practice and society in traditional India [Geaves:1998]. In the Mughal era an individual's personal religious identity was not formed by strictly bounded attitudes and confessional biases. Although there would be a religious allegiance, other loyalties lay with one's patron, sponsor or employer, who was placed within a network of other relationships in turn. Thus Mughal society was comprised of such inter-connecting loyalties, mostly on a local rather than a global basis. Accordingly, as the Mughal sphere of power grew and then waned in actual power a decentralisation process ensued, which included the religious dimension. In time a clerical hierarchy would evolve with greater power to mould and supervise individuals and their groups but there was a freedom to frequent shrines and rituals of other traditions. Thus, through the nineteenth and into the next century a paradoxical situation developed with some definition of religious identity alongside some nominality of adherence becoming commonplace.

Even with the creation of clear boundaries between 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' there existed and still exists a trans-religious sense of the 'darshanic' defined by Eck [1985. 3 & 87] as standing 'in the presence of the deity and to behold the image with one's own eyes, to see and to be seen by the deity'. A Darshanic expression of religion includes the sight and touch of a religious symbol through which the believer has contact with the Transcendent and gains blessings. Muharram processions can be seen as *darshanic* with the *'alams,* battle standards representing the Karbala martyrs, garlanded with scarves symbolising the disrespect and violation shown to the wives and daughters of 'Ali and his followers. As Cole notes *supra* traditional South Asian popular religion has a mutual interaction rather than insularity. Hasan comments:

> Both in urban and rural areas, most Hindus venerated Husain, the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, and incorporated his cult into their ritual calendar as yet one more divinity in the pantheon. His trials and tribulations at Karbala, now in Iraq, and his courage and tenacity inspired unbounded faith in a universal nemesis ensuring justice for oppressed souls.
>
> [Hasan: 1997. 31].

Such an interdependence of religious identities and practice was to be difficult for *'ulama* arriving in Lucknow from the Iraqi and Iranian centres of Shi'a scholarship to support. From the *Usuli* school of Shi'a jurisprudence these *'alim* in contrast to the more conservative *Akhbari* tradition gave to the *'ulama* a permission to apply 'independent reasoning' *ijtihad* to every aspect of life in the religious, social and political aspects. Such independence was restricted for the majority of the faithful as the Usuli jurists emphasised that the laity should choose a living jurisprudent as their 'reference point for imitation' a *marja al-taqlid.* Thus into the nineteenth century the Usuli '*ulama* of Lucknow sought to establish clear boundaries for their own and thus the city's religious communities to secure their base of authority. By encouraging the public cursing of the first three caliphs *tabarra,* they alienated the Sunni from sharing in the annual Muharram rituals. A ruling given in 1803 from Sayyid Dildar Ali Nasirabadi equally excluded any Hindu participation in the events,

> ...until one knew for sure that some one born an unbeliever had accepted all the necessary beliefs, he had to be judged an infidel even though he mourned Imam Husayn.'
>
> [Cole: 1988. 224-227].

Other Usul *alim* went to considerable lengths to declare contact with Hindu people to be ritually polluting, which ironically assisted to incorporate the Shi'a more fully into the Indian social system as based upon caste [Dumont: 1970. 42-46].

The governing elite of the Awadh state did not directly encourage such divisions as the Shi'a were always in a minority and the Sunni and Hindu peoples were essential for support. However, as the British gained power in the Awadh in 1856 and the uprising of the following year failed, so a radical realignment of power ensued. The Shi'ite domination weakened and they found themselves no longer able to control the region. The sponsor-client structure was replaced by a new pattern of politics with mass participation on 'party' lines. The stringency of the Lucknow Shi'a *'ulama* had laid the foundations of partisan groups based upon religious identity.

The Sunni strategy of reaction to the Shi'a emphases of the Muharram month is shown by a contemporary of Shah Wali Allah [1703 – 1762], Mazhar Janjanan who aligned himself with the Naqshabandi and Chishti orders in their opposition to the Shi'a. The method of confrontation was to hold ceremonies acknowledging the roles of Abu Bakr and Umar as distinct from 'Ali, a practice which continues into modern Pakistan. Later in the Mughal period the agitator and proponent of the jihad movement against the Sikh state of the Punjab, Sayyid Ahmad of Rai Bareilly [1786 –

1831] widened his polemic to include the Shi'a declaring them to be *kufr* and outside true Islam. As British power and influence increased in the early part of the nineteenth century culminating in the 1859 India Act, agitation, public acrimony and protest between the Sunni and Shi'a expressions was restrained by banning pamphleteering and texts from both sides of the disputes [Ahmed: 1987]. 277].

3.2.7 Themes in Shi'a and Sunni relationships in nineteenth century India.

Lucknow was the final, and in many ways the most significant of the Indian capital cities in which Shi'ism was rooted and institutionalised in ways comparable to Sunnism in other cities in both pre colonial and during British rule. Yet although the Shi'a have formed creative and enterprising elements of India's Muslims from the time of the tradition's arrivals in Ismai'li and then Twelver forms, there are comparatively few definitive studies of them. Hollister [1953], Rizvi [1986] and Pinnault [1992] do present specific studies but Cantwell Smith comments:

> In India approximately one out of every thirteen Muslims is a Shi'i. Between him and his Sunni fellow-Muslims there are theoretical and rival distinctions; of which the former are today relevant to no practical issues...Religiously, on the other hand, Shi'a separateness is traditional only. We have not given the Shi'a group separate treatment in our study of the changes wrought in Islam by modern social processes, because there is nothing in the differences between Sunni and Shi'i fundamentally relevant to those processes. The two groups diverge over what answers are to be given to questions, which today do not arise.
>
> [Cantwell Smith: 1943. 344-345].

The place of the Shi'a in Indian Muslim history seems to be therefore in its shadows. To an extent this is attributable to their already acknowledged minority status numerically compared to the Sunni tradition, and the practice of *taqiyya* dissimulation of Shi'a identity when in hostile situations. These reasons do not fully explain however, the Shi'a presence within the complexities of nineteenth and pre-independence twentieth century Indian society. Indian Islam is in itself a heterogeneous society within which Hinduism has influenced departure from Sunni ideals; there is the legacy of Akhbar's policies of tolerance; in this time period the growing possibiltiy of pasrtition into Muslim Pakistan and secular if Hindu dominated India; regional and occupational differences create contrasting aspirations; distinctions between Sayyids, Shaykhs, Gujeratis, and Bengalis add to the diversity, and groups considered to be descendants of Hindu converts, contribute a further dimension of separate affiliations.

Into this network of alliances, beliefs and communal sentiments entered the recurrent theme in the nineteenth century of Hindu-Muslim inter-communal violence and outbreaks of intra-communal antagonism between Sunni and Shi'a. Lucknow was a focal point of such incidents being both the political and cultural centre of the Awadh [Oudh] province, which had been dominated by a Shi'a elite since the seventeenth century.

There were several issues that caused the intra-communal strife between Shi'a and Sunni. Certainly, in the first place there was the succession dispute over who should legitimately have succeeded Muhammad; secondly there was the question of the source of authority in the *ummah* and how it should be expressed. Authority was perceived either to reside in the community or in those descended from the Prophet. Even with these differences however, the evolution of historical Islam had presented patterns of behaviour and religious practice that were basically shared by Shi'a and

Sunni alike. Both Shi'a and Sunni in the sub continent celebrate Muharram but the Shi'a do possess distinct understandings of the event and its accompanying ideology, which surround devotion to the *Ahl i Bayt* the Prophet's family. These provide a form of emotional expression and public demonstration of affiliation and not simply a pattern of personal moral and spiritual conduct [Hjortshoj: 1977. 108]. This affiliation was achieved by a focus upon the martyr Imam Husayn, whose commemoration at Muharram by the Shi'a faced condemnation by Sunni groups as *bidat* innovation [Hasan: 1997. 209].

> ...the alignment of individuals with the subjective qualities...not mediated by doctrines, laws or objective representations of Kerbala. There were no doctrines or rules of conduct that governed these expressions.'
>
> [Hjortshoj: 1977. 137].

Alongside the emotions of Muharram there was in addition the concept of martyrdom as a source of authority:

> ..as a martyr, the position of Husain defined spiritual strength and authority as a condition of weakness in the world of men, and 'nearness to God' as a distance from overt [usually political] authority.
>
> [Hjortshoj: 1977. 144].

Linked to this understanding of authority was the Shi'a emphasis on *taqlid,* as the delegation of authority and reliance upon the *'ulama* for religious guidance and interpretation of the sacred text. Intrinsic to Shi'a practice moreover, were various understandings and attitudes that enabled them to exist in a hostile environment. Yet in Lucknow, and to some extent in Hyderabad, the Shi'a had become the most influential and powerful group.

The late nineteenth century was a time of reform and reassessment amongst North India's Sunni traditions. During this time of change conflict between Shi'a and Sunni streams seems to have emerged particularly whenever transition appeared to affect the respective positions of influence of the two expressions. The intra-communal strife is exemplified in two court cases launched against the Shi'a in the 1880's, together with a campaign established in the next decade by the *Ahl i- Hadith* against the Shi'a. This animosity towards the minority movement was not surprising given that the Shi'a were the object of antipathy from all the Sunni late nineteenth century reformist movements. The conflict centred upon the Muharram ceremonies, which although they have a private dimension in the *majalis* also present the account of Karbala in graphic public processions and symbols. Indeed it was such public observance that preoccupied the attention of the reformers in India as these rites declared unequivocally a perception of the truth, of how the faith of Islam should be understood, attracted the adherents of that perspective to make open their commitment to that expression, and confronted other Muslim groups.

> Where for 'visitors' religious performances can, in the nature of the case, only be presentations of a particular religious perspective, and thus aesthetically appreciated or scientifically dissected, for participants they are in addition enactments, materializations, realizations of it – not only models of what they believe, but also models *for* the believing of it. In these plastic dramas men attain their faith as they portray it.
>
> [Geertz: 1973. 113-114].

The marking of the Muharram ceremonies therefore, with the processions of the *taziyeh* and the public cursing of the first three caliphs, the *tabarra,* became in the nineteenth century moments of public definition of Shi'a identity provoking Sunni responses.

In examining Lucknow in the Awadh [modern Uttar Pradesh], the Shi'a situation in eighteenth and nineteenth century India is exemplified. The presence of Twelver Shi'ism in Awadh owes its existence to migrations from Iran and Iraq during the Mughal period and then in the transition between that rule and the British colonial administration. There was an interaction financially and intellectually between the Shi'a families of the Awadh and the shrines and madrassahs of Iran and Iraq with shrines being erected in Lucknow representing their prestige and power. The maintenance of a distinct Shi'a identity was to be through the Muharram and its declaration of allegiance to identification with Imam Husayn and the *Ahl-i Bayt,* which both in that century and since separates the Shi'a as a distinct tradition claiming legitimacy for the claims of its ideology.

Chapter 4.

The Uses of 'Ali in Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at and Shi'a traditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

4.1 Sources of intra-Muslim conflict.

In the latter part of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries Muslims in India held a self-image that if they could once more be as godly as their community had been under the Mughal ruler Aurangzib [r. 1658 – 1707], then they would be more significant rulers [Hardy: 1972. 26]. A number of reformist leaders and thinkers noted with dismay the need for renewal of faith and conduct. The *Ahl i-Hadith* leader Nawab Siddiq Hasan Khan saw 'rebellions and religious disorder among Muslims as evidence of the total decline that could only precede the judgement...He awaited the turn of the fourteenth Islamic century in 1884 as the most likely moment for the end to appear'. [Metcalf: 1982. 269]. In such an atmosphere the Ahmadi movement emerged with its key figure Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. He was convinced that the *ulama* of the day were neglecting some of the most pressing and specific problems with which the Indian Muslim community had to grapple in the nineteenth century. In his view the most important of these problems was generated by the activity of Christian missionaries, who were systematically defaming the Prophet and making every effort to destroy Islam. The *ulama* failed to rise to the occasion. Instead of concentrating their efforts on repelling these attacks, they continued their squabbles and spent their energies on attacking other Muslims'. [Friedmann: 1989. 106]. Equally, Swami Dayananda of the Arya Samaj Hindu revivalist movement in the late nineteenth century was concerned that Hindu orthodoxy was being weakened from within and failing before Islam and Christianity [Jones: 1976. 33]. As has been noted *supra* however, Indian Islam since the mid-nineteenth century and the advent of British rule had been beset with intra-communal dispute and debate between various forms of reformist and preservationist movements seeking to express their particular vision of the faith for new circumstances.

The major challenge to Muslim unity lay in this diversity of expression as India's Muslims found themselves a minority without the overall political power they had to some degree once enjoyed. There continued to be forms of 'populist Islam' where adherents far from centres of Muslim education and scholarship maintained 'Hindu' devotional practices, and family law particularly in rights for women offered through the Qur'an and shari'ah were not observed. There continued to be a tension, as in other parts of the Muslim world, between Qur'anic scripturalists and Sufi *pirs* and *tariqa* movements. The former stressed the transcendence of God and the otherness of his creation whilst the latter modelled the intimacy of believers with God and the invisible divine world. The teaching of ibn Arabi [1165 - 1240] and the concept of the unity of being *wuhdat al-wujud* seemed to the purist Muslim all too similar to the themes of the Bhakti inspired Sant tradition and the Upanishads viz, that humankind in the depths of its essence was identical to the universe in its depths with *Brahman.* Thus, the contacts between adherents of the Hindu traditions and Sufi masters seemed a compromise too far for the stricter interpreters of Islam [McCleod: 1997. 8791]

Reaching retrospectively into the thirteenth/fourteenth and then into the eighteenth centuries, reformist Islam in India found key sources for the new circumstances. Firstly, in ibn Taymiyya [661/1263 – 728/1328] comes an inspiration for anti-Sufi attitudes and secondly in Shah Wali Allah [1115/1703 – 1175/1762] came an integration of theology, philosophy and mystical understanding which subordinated the enthusiasm of the Sufis to the doctrine of divine transcendence and application of the shari'ah. Wali Allah was effectively a disciple of the seventeenth century reformer Ahmad Sirhindi [d. 1625], who criticised the philosophical monism of Ibn Arabi but retained certain Sufi views and techniques in s pattern that stressed the traditional Islamic values and Law. Both scholars opposed the teaching of ibn Arabi and al-Ghazali by stressing the distinctness of God from the creation and his creatures and emphasising the authority of the Qur'an, and study of Hadith traditions. As part of an active critique of populist Muslim practices in India, Shah Wali Allah opposed devotions at the shrines of *pirs* and any imputation to them of spiritual powers. Equally, he criticised Shi'a perspectives on the caliphate rehearsing Sunni views of the 'righteous caliphs' *rasidun khilaphat.* If Shah Wali Allah's writings were to see little effect in his own lifetime they provided a paradigm for the reformers of the late nineteenth century and their descendants in the subsequent century. Essentially, in harmony with ibn Taymiyya, Wali Allah gave to succeeding generations of reformist Islamists a perspective, which stressed the Prophet's words and a distancing from the pervading Indian environment on Islam itself.

Indian Islam in this period embraced the traditionalist preaching of Ahmad Raza Khan, Hajji Shari'at-Allah and Karamat 'Ali Jaunpur, the modernist ideas of Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan and the Aligarh Movement together with the *ulama* centred upon the *Dar ul ulum* of Deoband founded in 1867. From inauspicious beginnings graduates from this seminary had risen to 949 in the period 1922 – 1931 [Hardy: 1972. 170] and thus to a situation of assertion and influence amongst sub-continent

Muslims with its provision of a regular stream of *fatwa* on many issues. Less aggressive in its stance was another *Dar ul ulum,* Farangi Mahal founded in 1694 in Lucknow from where *fatwa* were given in an endeavour to equip Muslims to live a genuinely Islamic way of life.

Such strains as there were between the contrasting Muslim strands reflected doctrinal, ritual and devotional differences in emphases but there were also emerging political divergences. A cause, which brought a measure of unanimity for India's Muslims related to the First World War campaigns in the Middle East and the status of the *khilafat* in Constantinople and its nominal centralising focus for global Islam. India's Muslims found themselves caught up in emotional attachment to the *khilafat,* which led to declarations of non-co-operation with the British government. Such events and other factors such as the independence movement, and concern for the moplahs, compelled Indian Muslims to reflect upon their political theories, which would mould their thinking for the future of India. Aspirations for a separate Muslim state, or a minority population state within a majority Hindu State became matters of debate and of necessity re-examination of the first four *khilafats* became essential. However, by the time of the late 1930's and most notably in the 1937 election, it had become clear that there were two epicentres of power in India – the British administration and the Congress party as an all-India movement. The Muslim League under Muhammad Ali Jinnah [1293/1876 – 1367/1948] was revitalised as the Muslim minority population realised its vulnerability in the face of a growing Hindu public dominance. The League became a third force and the call for a separate Muslim homeland, a 'Pakistan' in the sub-continent became a greater reality. By the end of the second world war the Muslim League had become a mass movement accentuating the distance between Islam and its environment in pre-partition India [Cantwell Smith: 1943. 312].

The movement for the establishment of Pakistan was not unopposed by *ulama,* most notably the *jami'yyat al-'ulama-i Hind,* inspired from the Deoband seminary. Led by Maulana Husain Ahmad Madani [1879 – 1957] the movement campaigned against a separate Muslim homeland, fearful that a 'Pakistan' would not represent a genuine Muslim state of all traditions but dominated by one expression of Islam. Hence he preferred an India of many faiths with all traditions represented justly. The failure of the *ulama* to convince the majority of India's Muslim population of their cause was due in part to their lack of sophistication in publicity as well as to their preoccupation with other matters. Amongst these were moves to stem renewed Hindu activity to seek the reversion of those born Hindu or of Hindu origin from Islamised communities in the 1920's, and in the next decade the Sunni – Shi'a strife focused in Lucknow had to be addressed.

Intra-Muslim clashes had already appeared during 1908 in Lucknow with Sunni groups introducing the practice of *Madhe i-Chiba* 'Praising the Prophet's Companions' during observance of Muharram with the Shi'a community. Startled by this innovation the Shi'a effectively retaliated with *tabarra* 'cursing the first three caliphs' and thus injuring Sunni sensitivities. An accord was reached for subsequent years until the conflict re-emerged in the 1935 ceremonies [Hasnain & Husain: 1988. 170-171]. Mistrust between the two Muslim communities was exacerbated by Sunni dissatisfaction with a government report and advice on the matter, which was complicated by Sunni adherents tending politically to the Muslim League and the

Shi'a to Congress election candidates. Such intra-faith dissonance has continued into the latter part of the century.

4.2 Identity and Approaches of Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at towards other Muslim groups. Relations with Sunni traditions: *zaruriyat-i din.*

Intrinsic to the ideology of the *Ahl i Sunnat* was their understanding of the 'essentials' of the Muslim faith *zaruriyat-I din.* This embraces the foundational *shahadah* but moves into a wider perspective if in the eyes of the *Ahl i-Sunnat* one is to be considered as a 'true Muslim' rather than as *kafir* 'unbeliever'. The differences and therefore the criteria for being recognised as authentic in faith rested crucially on the *Ahl i- Sunnat* understanding of the Prophet.

4.3 Common use of religious symbols.

Therefore, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Islam in India as a public phenomenon with multiple divergences and expressions found itself confronting both internal strains and external pressures. Muslims found themselves between formulating responses to colonial encroachment, revivalist tendencies in Hinduism, both the expression and rejection of traditionalist movements, and the creation of new forms of coherent responses to the modern world. Into this multi-layered set of relationships and means of delineating an authentic Islam common religious symbols from the history of Islam were to be deployed. Both the Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* traditions drew upon shared concepts in the figures of the Prophet, 'Ali, the Ahl i-Bayt, and Sufi practices although as has been noted their derivation, exposition and usage were officially largely independent of one another.

4.3.1 Usage of 'Ali.

Islam relies upon knowledge and interpretations of the past for the evaluation and understandings of its present. The present for Islam in whatever period is a product of its history and almost every division can be traced to some distinction in the early history of the Faith. Between Shi'a and Sufi influenced Sunni believers there is a common acceptance of the place of 'Ali amongst the first four 'rightly guided' caliphs, acknowledgement of him as a key source of esoteric knowledge, and point of access to the Prophet's transmission of gnosis through the majority of Sufi *silsilah*. 'Ali however, also represents a political dimension within Islam in a idealised if troubled early history with its tension between charismatically endowed leadership inherited from the Prophet or the bureaucratised dynastic families of Mecca, who strove to reassert their authority after Muhammad's death. Both Shi'a and Sufi use figures such as 'Ali to portray and if possible to create a righteous society in the present through catharsis, a transformation from corruption to purity, from *Jahiliyya* to genuine Islam. The Islamic concept of history is suffused with the concept of cycles of decay and revival. This calls for a reconstruction of a pure past with an *imitatio Muhammadi et Ali.* This radical re-invention of tradition seems to be based in an inheritance under which the transmitted canon has been blurred and lost with the result that the only way to legitimate the essential rebirth and revival is to look behind this erased tradition. The consequence is the creation of a new normative past. In the process Muslims can become the precursors of a new hegemony with the means and authority to establish a renewed Islam.

Both Shi'a and Sufi Sunni have experienced at different times in their respective histories marginalisation and been unable to exercise actual political power. Thus, 'Ali has been seen as an ideal caliph beset with the internal opposition of rivals, forced to confront them in battle, and restricted in his potential achievements. His death at the hands of a Kharijite is ambiguous, as he actually was caliph when he died. All the other Imams but for the twelfth died in *taqiyya* and usually by assassination though again Husayn may be excepted as he dies in open opposition to the de facto ruler. 'Ali therefore serves a range of ideals and needs in the space between the divine plan as revealed in Qur'an and Shari'ah and the human administration of that purpose. The two traditions under examination do not have to accommodate their particular understandings of him to one another, as neither outside Iran for example possesses literal political power.

Within the Shi'a understanding and maintenance of authority, 'Ali is a central figure and the particular modality of his charismatic identity is of great significance. As a prototypical figure for the rest of Shi'a history, 'Ali personifies both in his historical and symbolic character, all that is sacred to the Shi'ite tradition. For a Sunni tradition such as the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* 'Ali is but one such personality. When conflicts did occur in the latter nineteenth and then in the twentieth centuries in India they erupted over explicit theological and historical statements that polarise Shi'a and Sunni as socio-religious groups into two religious communities. *Mahd i-Sahaba* and *Tabarra,* the praise and condemnation of the caliphate erases ambiguities, similarities and any common ground between the two traditions replacing it with simple polarised opposition. Through to the partition of India, the common symbol of 'Ali and the Prophet's family preserved an artificial Muslim unity until a time of crisis at Muharram when the communal or factional nature of the Shi'a/Sunni relationship emerged and concretised the actual divisions. Such a legitimisation of division in Islam would not have occurred in an Islamic state, either Sunni or Shi'a, in which one expression would be in subjection to the other in a functional fiction of unanimity.

4.3.2 The Imamate and Sufi perspectives.

There is also common theological ground behind Shi'a and Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at with their understandings of a spiritual hierarchy and the invisible government of the created order. Under the British rule of India, neither tradition had an explicit voice in government but both could construct imagined processes of dominion and as was noted could enter debate on caliphate as the surviving symbol of Muslim power until 1924. Equally, both traditions participated in the welter of political controversy over the future of India culminating in the formation of modern Pakistan and India. Both Shi'a and Sufi offered themselves as alternatives to the state. The Sufi *pir* by his charisma and character attracted followers in a world of competing co-equals, some religious and others secular. The Sufi however, had an intrinsic advantage in drawing his disciples with his power being seen to emanate from a higher source than any other, through his spiritual *silsilah* and ancestry to God alone.

This image of power suffusing the universe from a sacred centre became a sophisticated all-embracing hierarchy of visible and invisible *wali* figures of an egalitarian and populist nature. Behind this structure stood the figure of the Prophet, the Perfect Man, ordering the universe. In gnostic terms, he was the *Qutb,* the pivot, who would draw the world to perfection. Before crises such as public displays at Muharram could disrupt the surface order, subliminally such a world perspective was shared with the Shi'ite understanding that every generation must have an Imam, even if hidden, a synonymous pivotal figure for the well-being of the creation. Hodgson notes:

> There might no longer be a Caliph with power in the ordinary political sense. But there remained a true spiritual Caliph, the immediate representative of God, who bore a far more basic sway than any outward Caliph.
>
> [Hodgson: 1974. II. 228].

3.3.3 Liminality, Unity and Conflict.

Both Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* use processional ceremonies at festivals to make their identity clear to the public arena. For the Shi'a the days of Muharram are significant in their understanding of a salvation history whilst *Maulid ul Nabi* the Prophet's birthday is important for the Sunni movements.

The sub-continent Shi'a Muslim tradition found its centres particularly in Lucknow and Hyderabad. Here the ceremonies of Muharram were open to both Sunni as much as to the Shi'a, as well as to Hindu participation as well [Hasnain & Husain: 1988. 156]. In Muharram as in observance of the *Maulid ul nabi,* the followers of a particular figure are able to unify themselves in distinction to a surrounding 'enemy'.

Such a movement is able to create a breach with the structural definition of their position in reality favouring instead a definition of what they regard as their true place in history and in their contemporary world. Thus the Shi'a would see themselves after the death of 'Ali and then the tragedy of Karbala as weak, vulnerable and victimised in a misdirection of Islam and history. In the *Maulid* a similar reversal of understanding takes place with the faith of the community declaring that contrary to all visible evidence the central figure of history and the unseen reality behind all reality is the person of the Prophet [Werbner: 1996a]. Turner describes such a 'liminal' position:

> What is interesting about liminal phenomena for our present purposes is the blend they offer of lowliness and sacredness, of homogeneity and comradeship. We are presented, in such rites, with a 'moment in and out of time' and in and out of secular social structure, which reveals, however fleetingly, some recognition [in symbol if not always in language] of a generalised social bond that has ceased to be and has simultaneously yet to be fragmented into a multiplicity of structural ties...It is as though there are here two major 'models' for human interrelatedness, juxtaposed and alternating. The first is of a society as a structured, differentiated and often hierarchical system of politico-legal-economic positions with many types of evaluation, separating men in terms of 'more' or 'less'. The second, which emerges recognizably in the liminal period, is of a society as an unstructured and relatively undifferentiated *comitatus*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders.

[Turner: 1969. 80].

The ritual of the festival and procession highlights the 'structural' or synchronic inferiority of some groups in political, social or economic terms in a society [Turner: 1969. 99-100]. This vulnerability and isolation from the structural definition of authority and status is important for an understanding of Karbala and its re-enactment at Muharram. In Mecca and Medina, Husayn might have been represented as a religious and political leader, and likewise of he had gathered a substantial military force with which to confront Yazid. By contrast, he led a group of some seventy-two people, including many women and children. At Karbala Husayn was simply the leader of the Household of the Prophet, with a few Muslims who of their own choice had gathered around him. Husayn's movement therefore, is characterised by fundamental bonds of kinship, loyalty and affection for the Imam. Two principles of authority in Islam confront one another again: charisma and virtue in the Imam and overt authority in the caliph.

'Ali faced opposition in his caliphate, as did Husayn as Imam. So from Karbala, it is feasible to comprehend why the ritual structure of Muharram is isolated from the structure of Shi'a doctrine and practice. Such distinctions did not exist in the time and setting of Karbala but they are seen as the results of Karbala. Neither 'Ali nor Husayn represented a deviant form of doctrine. Doctrinal distinctions followed from the rejection of Husayn and the Imamate. Karbala can be seen as a point at which Islam is poised on the edge of an irrevocable division and yet still imagined as a unity. In the *Maulid* Muslim adherents declare similar sacralisation of the context in which they live and a reversal of values. In an 'anti-structural' definition of true Islam observance of the celebration points to a hidden or esoteric understanding of reality and to the one in Muslim understanding who is the centre of creation.

In the last stage of colonial India the common usage of religious symbols drawn from the members of the Prophet's Household and rituals surrounding them provided both semiotics of unity and disaffection. The Shi'a as 'people of misfortune' saw the reiteration of Karbala during Muharram as a subjunctive re-enactment of the times and people through whom all Muslims might have been united. In fact, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when Muslims might have asserted themselves as a unified minority within the sub-continent they rediscovered and repeated the tragedy of 'Ali's death and Husayn's loss at Karbala once more. Shi'as and Sunnis became again the agents of historical roles defending the images of what might have been a unity in the reality of division.

Chapter 5.

Further uses of 'Ali: in the British context.

5.1 Migration and Settlement of Muslim Groups within the UK

There are several landmark dates by which to trace the evolution of the Muslim communities within British society. One line would be to note the establishment in 1889 of the first Mosque in Britain at Woking in Surrey with funds provided by the Begum Shah Jehan of Bhopal, India. One hundred years later Muslim communities would become prominent with the reaction to Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses,* and the intervention of Ayatollah Khomeini in the issue. Another chronological line would be to track a mere thirty years of development. A second line would be to trace developments from 1944 when King George VI gave a site on the edge of Hyde Park in London for a Mosque in exchange for land in Cairo for an Anglican Cathedral. In those thirty years a long-standing but virtually invisible Muslim presence in Britain was to change radically into a highly visible and developing part of British society.

However, a Muslim presence in the UK dates back some three hundred years to the East India Company's trading work in the eighteenth century, when men from the Indian sub-continent were recruited into their merchant vessels. Known as 'lascars' these seamen became familiar in British ports with some settling and marrying into the indigenous British community [Visram: 1986. 51]. After the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 these seamen communities grew further as Yemenis and Somalis were recruited from Aden into the merchant navy. The Yemenis settled in Cardiff and South Shields and the Somalis in Liverpool forming the first permanent Muslim communities in Britain. Moreover, the Yemeni community focused its development around a *Shaykh* of the Alawi Sufi tradition who arrived in the UK early in the twentieth century. Shaykh Abdullah Ali al-Hakimi [d. 1954] had arrived in the UK in 1936 establishing a mosque and *zawiya* firstly in South Shields and in 1944 in Cardiff [Geaves: 2000.102-103] The centres or *zawiyas* of the order spread to other Yemeni groups in Sheffield and Birmingham providing early examples of community self-organisation and stability through overt Muslim means.

Before 1914, the centres of Muslim activity in Britain were Liverpool, London and Woking, which drew a somewhat eclectic gathering of students from South Asia, businessmen and some well-known converts to Islam. These transient communities were responsible for the foundation of the first mosques in the UK [Lewis: 1994. 11-12]. For example, a Liverpool solicitor, Henry William Quilliam in 1887 embraced Islam whilst travelling in Morocco. Becoming known as Shaykh Abdullah he began to organise prayers, observance of festivals, weddings and funerals, and education classes in Liverpool. Supported by Muslim leaders from outside Britain he was appointed by the Ottoman Sultan *Shaykh al-Islam* in the UK and the Amir of Afghanistan provided funds to open an Islamic Institute in Liverpool.

The Woking Mosque became from 1913 onwards a significant centre of Muslim *da'wah* in Britain with the key figures of Lord Headley, who had embraced Islam that same year whilst working in India, and Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, a Lahore barrister, who was to be leading Muslim in the UK until his death in 1932. The Mosque suffered from suspicions by Khwaja-ud-Din's associations with the Ahmadiyya movement whose orthodoxy was questioned. Nonetheless, the Woking Mosque and its literary society became a centre for distinguished Muslim visitors from the sub-continent. Syed Ameer Ali [d.1928], Marmaduke Pickthall [d. 1936] and Abdullah Yusuf Ali, the latter two translators of the Qur'an into English, were members of the Literary Society [Clark: 1986. 39-41]

The Muslim presence in Britain changed in the inter-war years growing from 100 in 1881 to 1,800 in 1931 as increasing numbers of students arrived from India. Not all were Muslims but the numbers are indicative of the greater visibility of South Asians in the UK. It was to be however, in the post second world war period that the Muslim presence in Britain was to change radically. The years between the initiative to create a Central London Mosque beginning in 1944 with the gift of a site and the decision to raise funds from 1947 to its opening in 1977 as the indicative dates for the creation of British Muslim communities.

5.2 Post Second World War Migration and Settlement.

Significant numbers of Muslims from South Asia began to arrive in Britain after the Second World War. As has been noted smaller scale migration and settlement had been occurring since the nineteenth century with the sporadic settlement of merchant seamen from the Middle East and India in seaport communities such as Cardiff, Liverpool, South Shields and the East End of London [Lewis: 1994. 11]. The earlier contacts between Britain and Muslim societies [Matar: 1998] had led to migration but these migrants had remained quiescent and largely invisible to the host community.

Post 1945 however, migration became a flow in a classic chain pattern of a 'pioneer' male generation seeking work and therefore economic improvement with a subsequent wave of wives and children arriving just prior to the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act, which restricted access for migrants into the UK. A subsequent influx of Asian origin migrants occurred from 1973 onwards as Africanisation policies were implemented in newly independent East African states.

In all these strands of migrants, Muslims are well represented and particular regions of South Asia are in turn strongly represented. These include Mirpur and the Punjab [Pakistan], Sylhet [Bangladesh] and Gujerat [India]. Similarly Muslims are well represented amongst migrants from regions, which remained within India after 1947 – some 20% of the ethnically Indian population in Britain are Muslim contrasting with 11% in India itself [Ally: 1979.2-3; Wahhab: 1989.6-7; Nielsen: 1992. 45]. The Muslim population of the UK in 1990 was estimated to be just fewer than one million members i.e. 2% of the national population. The majority of some 804,000 are of South Asian origin [Vertovec & Peach: 1997. 19], with other groups drawn from the Middle East, North Africa, Nigeria, Turkey and Turkish Cyprus. In addition the South Asian origin communities bear a different age profile to the majority community. It is youthful with twice as many under 16 year olds compared to the rest of the national population with the average size of Pakistani/Bangladeshi households between 4.81 and 5.34 compared to 2.43 for the majority [Lewis: 1994. 14-15]. The indication is that even with the complex pluralism of Muslim traditions in the UK, it is the South Asian variety, which continue to be the main public face of Islam in Britain.

5.3 Muslim traditions from South Asia.

Transplanted with the migrants were their religious traditions from the sub-continent in both the reformist and traditionalist expressions [Williams: 2000]. The *Ahl-I Hadith, Deobandi* and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at movements* emerged in the nineteenth centuries as defined tendencies [*maslak*] [Nielson: 1992.131 & Andrews: 1993. 9] from a context of Islamic redefinition in the face of political transition in India with the decline of Mughal power and its assumption by British rule. Descriptions of these traditions have been given *supra* in 2.1.2.

5.4 Jama'at i-Islami movement.

These first three movements emerged during a time of political and social change in India and transferred to Britain with the migrations from 1945 onwards. The *Jama'at i-Islami*/Islamic Foundation [Andrews: 1993 & Williams: 2000] emphasis developed in another time of change as moves for Indian independence grew in the first part of the twentieth century. Its founder, Abu al-A'la Maududi stressed that Muslims should be aiming for an Islamic state ruled according to principles based upon the Qur'an, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet and the *Shari'ah* rather than living in a secular state with a Hindu majority. Initially, Maududi was opposed to both the plans for a secular if united India, and to the option for a separate Muslim nation as Pakistan. Eventually, he adopted the Pakistan proposal, migrated there in the 1947 Partition, and began to stress the necessity of establishing a state based upon strict Qur'anic principles.

5. 5 The Shi'a tradition.

Within the diversity of Islamic expression in the UK, note must also be made of the Shi'a streams. Little specific evidence is available on the numbers of Shi'a whether of Twelver or Sevener streams resident in the UK. This is due firstly, as in other circumstances to the lack of statistical differentiation between Muslim traditions and their adherents, and secondly to the Shi'a practice as a minority within wider Islam of observing *taqiyya* when confronted by seeming hostility.

Most South Asian Shi'a who comprise the British communities are descended from Iranian migrants who came mostly in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to India, or from Sunnis who converted to Shi'ism to gain positions at the courts of Shi'a rulers. [Robinson: 1988. 21 & 1993. 24]. The majority form the Twelver stream *Ithna Ashari* with Isma'ilis significant more for their enterprise than their numbers.

5. 6 The distribution of Ahl i- Sunnat wa jama'at and Twelver Shi'a traditions.

Currently, it is difficult to ascertain the exact numbers of Muslim people in the UK and thus to determine adherents to *Ahl i- Sunnat wa jama'at* and the Twelver Shi'a traditions are correspondingly inexact. Census details in the UK at present have not included a category by which to differentiate members of one or other religious tradition or of none. Thus to examine the 1991 Census to extract Muslim surnames would render no great accuracy in statistical evidence. Not all names of sub-continent origin will prove to be Muslim, many will not identify themselves by ethnic identity preferring a common Islamic affiliation, others may not reveal themselves at all if their residency in the UK is illegal. Consequently, the optimum course of action is to combine the information available from the existing ethnic category with the country of birth information for those who come from majority Muslim nations. This will not include Muslims born in Muslim minority nations such as India and those who have embraced Islam from the Afro-Caribbean and indigenous white population.

Drawing upon Anwar: 1993, Nielsen: 1992 and Geaves: 1999 it is feasible to propose these estimates.

Country of Origin.	
Pakistan	477,000
Bangladesh	163,000
India	134,000
East African of Indian origin	80,000
Arab Nations	150,000
African Muslims	115,000
Turkish Cypriot/Turkish	70,000
Iran	50,000
Malaysia	30,000
Other Muslim countries	148,000
Total	1,517,000.

Figure 5.

The Muslim presence within the UK comes predominantly from South Asia. Lewis: [1994. 15-16] confirms that with their numerical dominance the South Asian Muslim communities have also formed permanent residencies and that most have British nationality. The initial signs of Asian presence came in the 1951 Census with a particular Pakistani element. Prior to the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigration Acts of 1962 and 1971 the population of sub-continent peoples began to increase significantly. Nielsen: [1992.] charts this increase of the population:

Census	Population
1951	5,000
1952	24,900
1971	170,000
1981	360,000

Figure 6.

The especially significant figure however, is not for the total estimate but the increasing birth rate amongst Muslim people born in the UK compared to the number of migrants born in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Census	Total Population	% Born in Britain.
1951	5,000	-
1961	24,900	1.2%
1971	170,000	23.5%
1981	360,000	37.5%
1991	640,000	47%

[Anwar: 1993 & Nielsen: 1992].

Figure 7.

There is also a diversity of place of regional origin amongst these statistics. Based upon a 1974 survey they reveal the defined regions for British Muslims' origins within the sub-continent:

Pakistan	Punjab	37%
	Kashmir	37%
	Karachi	6%
	N.W.Frontier	4%
	Other	7%
Bangladesh [East Pakistan]		9%
India	Punjab	49%
	Gujarat	16%
	Other	35%

[College de France: 1983].

Figure 8.

The actual pattern of places of origin is more complex than this 1983 survey indicates. The majority of the Kashmiri population comes from the Mirpur district with Punjabi people originating from the Cambellpur area. The majority of the Bangladeshi communities come from Sylhet and the Chittagong areas. There is in addition a number of migrants from East Africa who were introduced into the British colonies there during the nineteenth century [Lewis: 1994. 16-17]. Muslims of sub-continent origin are often inaccurately described as Pakistani or Indian whereas their self-definition has focused upon the immediate family group, its specific village or town of ancestral residence be it in Pakistan, Bangladesh or India. As the roots in these localities are lost by the British born generations of Muslims identities are less focused upon geography and family ties but upon the religious emphases of a particular Muslim tradition.

The majority of South Asian communities within the UK were created by a four-phase pattern of migration. Firstly, the 'Pioneer' phase followed by a process of 'Chain Migration' of single male workers, succeeded by the arrival of wives and children, and finally the appearance of a British born generation. During the decade from 1960 there was a significant increase in the migration numbers as wives and children of residents already in Britain arrived to join them, pre-empting the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which was intended to prohibit automatic rights of entry for Commonwealth citizens. There was also, as Shaw reveals, the perception that the members of the single male phase of migration, had assimilated themselves into British society thereby losing their religious and cultural identities [Shaw: 1988. 46-49]. Shaw also notes that the economic pressure to obtain work and subsequently affordable housing entailed a weakening of religious observance. These multiple concerns also motivated family migration in this period. Some 17,120 Pakistani origin migrants entered the UK between 1955 and 1960 whilst some 50,170 entered in the eighteen months prior to the 1962 introduction of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. There was still a need however, for workers so until the 1972 Immigration Act closed the avenue male dependants under sixteen years of age were permitted to enter the UK. This again accelerated the entry of whole families, which further consolidated the permanent residency of South Asians in Britain. An important and chronologically separate migration of whole families occurred in the early 1970's culminating in 1972 – 1974 from East Africa. Following 'Africanization' policies in the newly independent East African states, in particular of Kenya and Uganda, Asian origin peoples were expelled either to settle in the UK or North America. Consequently, by 1981 some 155,000 South Asians of East African origin were settled in Britain of whom some 15% were Muslim [Clarke: 1990. 167].

Nielsen links the immigration process with the growth in the number of mosques in Britain [Nielsen: 1992. 44-45]. The influx of wives and children increased the awareness for the need of religious education amongst the younger generation, for public religious practice such as *salat,* and thus for buildings to function as mosques and madrassahs. In 1966 some eighteen new mosques were registered with a steady increase per year of some ten additional mosques each year. From 1975 the registrations per annum doubled which parallels the increase in the Muslim population, the overt need of mosque facilities, and the growing confidence and visibility of the communities in Britain.

Year	**Registrations**	**Total**
1966	5	18
1967	4	22
1968	9	31
1969	7	38
1970	11	49
1971	8	57
1972	8	65
1973	8	73
1974	8	81
1975	18	99
1976	20	119
1977	17	136
1978	21	157
1979	17	174
1980	19	193
1981	30	223
1982	23	246
1983	22	268
1984	22	290
1985	24	314
1990		452

{Nielsen: 1992. 45].

Figure 9.

Geaves states that by 1997 there would be some 1,000 mosques registered in Britain [Geaves: 1999. 363]. The increase in the numbers of registered mosques between 1966 and 1975 reflect both the growth in the Muslim population and its requisite needs as well as the expression of particular ethnic and religious ideological emphases. The establishment of mosques, which also serve as cultural and educational centres have assisted the various Muslim streams to provide both a symbolic expression of faith and a literal refuge at times from an alien environment.

5.7 The Ahl-i Sunnat wa jama'at tradition in Britain.

As has been discussed *supra* the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* tradition has had a lengthy history of conflict with reformist movements in the sub-continent during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Geaves records that such intra-faith disputes are on the decrease amongst the expressions resident in the UK [Geaves: 1999. 80] whilst there may be rivalries within the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* themselves over control of mosques. Neilsen suggests that three elements identify the tradition:

1. The centrality of the Prophet with his role as intercessor both in the present and at the day of judgement.
2. Spiritual authority is mediated through the descendants of the Prophet and those of Sufi masters and saints.
3. The spirituality of the tradition is expressed in festivals such as the *milad ul nabi,* the Prophet's birthday and the *'urs* anniversaries of the deaths of the *pirs* saints.

[Nielsen: 1992. 133].

Several other features will characterise both the piety of *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* expressed in the mosque building and in the actions of the believers. Invariably, mosques within this tradition in Britain will be decorated and illuminated especially at festival and *'urs* times with coloured lights and decorations. In addition above the *minbar* will be the calligraphic designation *Ya Allah* and to its left-hand side will be the inscription *Ya Rasul Allah.* At the close of the formal *salat* those present will join in less formal and rhythmic prayers *du'a dhikr* or songs in Urdu *na'at* in which the Prophet is honoured and his blessings are sought. Gatherings will end with the hands of the Imam and of descendants of a *Pir,* who are present, being kissed.

This devotion to the Prophet and his person have given to the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* expression further definition in public issues. The reaction of adherents within this tradition to the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* in 1989 was notably strong and unified the movement in a cause, which in turn led the leaders to co-operate with other Muslim groups in their opposition to the text. The work of the reformist and radical groups within British Islam in attracting young people has also motivated the leadership of *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* mosques to seek to retain their children, adolescents and young people within the movement resisting the attractions of more strident and high profile groups. A further factor in the development of the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* in the UK has been the arrival of resident *pirs,* who form epicentres for circles of followers and thus hold their allegiance to this expression of Islam.

Geaves cites an opinion, albeit critically, that some 90% of South Asian Muslims [Geaves: 1999. 82] belong to the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* tradition. It is certainly arguable that the majority of the first-generation migrants came from rural contexts familiar with migration practices and nourished by the traditional Sufi focused Islam.

Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at respondents affirmed the origins of their communities to be invariably from the sub-continent and the influences of Sufi ideas and practices:

Respondent 2.4:

2. **The Muslim Community, which you serve – would you describe their origins, cultural background, and social/educational status in the UK?**

The community here in Birmingham is diverse but mainly in this area from the sub-continent.

3. **Do you identify with a particular tradition/*mashlaq* within Islam?**

Sunni.....with Sufi influences.....Barelvi people are associated with the Trust.....

And Respondent 2.6

2. **The Muslim Community which you serve – would you describe their origins, cultural background, social/educational status in the UK?**

We serve people linked to what we call the Ahl I-Sunnat wa jama'at .....the way of the Prophet………..they are mainly from India and Pakistan…....

3. **Do you identify with a particular tradition/*mashlaq* within Islam?**

Yes, the People of the Prophet's sunnah.

And Respondent 2.13

2. **The Muslim Community, which you serve – would you describe their origins, cultural background, social/educational status in the UK?**

We are part of the People of the Prophet's Way.....the Ahl i-Sunnat.......mostly people from Pakistan and North India.

3. **Do you identify with a particular tradition/*mashlaq* within Islam?**

Yes, with the Barelwi – Sufi way........

If the first predominantly single male arrivals were more concerned with establishing themselves economically then the settlement of wives and children reinforced their religious identity of beliefs and practices maintained by precedent and particularly influenced by the work of Maulana Ahmad Raza Khan [1865-1921] [Geaves: 1996b. 169]. This has not been without criticism from the second and third generation of the initial wave of migrants and they too have been the subjects of proselytism by reformist groups such as the Deobandi movement.

Recent developments amongst the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* are the appearance of resident Sufi *Pirs* in the UK; professional and increasingly prosperous chairmen of mosque committees; and gradually the appointment of educated *Imams* who are familiar with the British social scene especially as it affects the younger generation.

The emergence of Sufi *Pirs* in Britain has encouraged the creation of a British Islam by a number of factors. Whereas the earlier waves of migrants maintained links with the homeland and specific geographical areas by supporting indigenous *Pirs* and shrines financially, and by periodic visits to such centres, the British born generations are now able to access the same sources of spiritual authority in the UK. In this manner, the Sufi focused movements are renewing local as much as global Islam in ways similar to the reformist expressions, by offering visible centres and personalities of spiritual and moral authority, creating fresh organisations, which embrace new generations of Muslims, and extending the boundaries of *Dar ul Islam* into heretofore hostile territories [Werbner: 1996a. 311]. In Britain there are two notable living exemplars of such resident *Pirs* in Sufi Abdullah of the *Dar ul Uloom Islamia,* Golden Hillock Road, Birmingham; the Pir Marouf of Bradford, and a third in the late Pir Wahhab Siddiqi [d. 1994] in Coventry, whose work is continued by his four sons.

Pir Abdullah arrived in Britain in 1962 from Pakistan as the *khalifa* deputy of a noted *Pir* Hazrat Shah, better known as Zindapir. Both belong within the Naqshbandi *tariqa* tracing their *silsila* to Abu Bakr and thence to the Prophet himself. His commissioned *da'wah* from Zindapir was to renew the faith and practices of the Muslim communities in the UK [Geaves: 1996b. 178]. The perception is that of establishing a *Dar ul Islam* in an unpromising and desolate region by the Sufi *pir* sacralizing the area by his presence and activity. From the humblest of beginnings with manual work in iron foundries, Pir Abdullah taught Qur'an classes, converted a dwelling into a mosque, and began the establishment of the present mosque and educational facilities in Golden Hillock Road. The consistent theme is the transformation of a *kufr* environment into one of sacredness and *Dar ul Islam.*

> The spirituality of a Sufi pir is embodied in the space he has sacralized. His divine blessing purifies his spatial dominion and endows it with sanctity. For Sufi Muslims in Britain, who are followers of Sufi Abdullah, Dar-e-Alia Ghamkol Sharif is the center of their symbolic universe. The separation and distance between Kohat and Birmingham or Manchester are overcome in their symbolic imagination to create a single, unitary cosmic order.
>
> [Werbner: 1996. 179].

Pir Marouf belongs within the lineage of the *Qadiri* Sufi *tariqa,* which traces itself back to Shayk Abdul Qadir Jilani [1077/470-1166/561]. Many *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* mosques hold Thursday events in which to honour Shayk Jilani and the majority of South Asian Muslim Sunni groups will have special occasions to remember him. Settling in the UK in 1961, Pir Marouf comes from Chak Sarwi in the Mirpur district of Azad Kashmir, which provides him with a considerable base of supporters as the Mirpuris are numerically the largest community within the UK South Asian population. To serve this community Pir Marouf founded the *Jami'at-i Tablighi ul-Islam* to spread Qur'anic teaching, the Hadith, and the consensus of teachings from the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* movement and the Hanafite School of Law.

Intrinsic to Pir Marouf's activities are those of the *pir* as pastoral counsellor as well as that of teacher. He is also the organiser of the traditional *julus* processions on the occasion of the Prophet's birthday *milad ul nabi* and the *urs* anniversary of a *pir's* death. These initially localised celebrations have been raised in 1987 and 1988 to national level with *milad* ceremonies [Geaves: 1999. 96-97]. However, because the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* has a history of locally based loyalties rather than a national or global vision it has been manifestly complex to avoid rivalries inhibiting the development of a unified approach to communal issues and the criticisms of reformist movements with more centralised organisations.

The third expression of *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* in Sufi form lies with the work of Pir Abdul Wahhab Siddiqi, who migrated to Britain in 1972 settling in Coventry. In distinction to Pirs Abdullah and Marouf, he was a professional person who was able to finance his religious activities and family by his business success. Drawing from the Hijazi branch of the Naqshanbi *tariqa,* Pir Siddiqi's *silsila* is traced back to Shayk Ahmad Sirhindi [d. 1034/1625] and Khwaja Nasir 'd-Din 'Ubaidu'llah Ahrar [1404 - 1490]. It is however, to Pir Siddiqi and his own father Munazira Azam Hazrat

Muhammad Umar Siddiqi Icharvi [d. 1971] that the movement and its current leaders look for inspiration. Indeed, the *urs* for both men is marked on the same day each year at the Hijaz College, Nuneaton, where Pir Siddiqi is buried. This *tariqa* has a distinctiveness amongst British Sufis influencing *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* expressions with its emphases upon both secular and religious education alongside spiritual formation.

Also distinctive to this expression of Muslim identity was Pir Siddiqi's concern to transcend the ethnic and religious divisions transferred from South Asia to Britain, which would be irrelevant to the new British Muslim generation, facing as they did and do different issues from their grandparents' generation. Hence, Pir Siddiqi held a vision for a united Muslim community led by *alim* educated in both religious *din* and secular *dunya* traditions. This led him to found a *Dar ul Uloom* in 1982 in Coventry which both inspired the creation of similar institutions in the UK for *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* adherents, and which in turn became the basis of the Hijaz College Islamic University, near Nuneaton. With his death in 1994, Pir Siddiqi's four sons assumed leadership of the *tariqa,* the first time British-born and educated Muslims had inherited such roles transcending both innovation with new university and educational emphases and tradition with maintaining mosque communities.

5.8 The Twelver Shi'a tradition in Britain.

On a global basis the Shi'a traditions are counted as forming some 10% – 15% of the total population of world Islam [Halm: 1991. iii & Momem: 1985. 282]. Momem states that Shi'a communities in North America and Europe until 1979 numbered some

40,000 in the USA and between 7,000 to 15,000 in each of Germany, France and Britain.

Patterns of migration into Britain for Shi'a in general and for Twelver Shi'a in particular initially followed a model common with Sunni Muslims and South Asian migrants with the exception of refugees from Iran. The first wave of single males seeking economic improvement to support families in the homeland was followed in the decade from 1960 by their wives and dependants creating more permanent resident communities in the urban areas of London, the Midlands, the North West and West Yorkshire. Amongst the influx of East African Asians in 1972-1974 were numbers of Shi'a Muslims, who settled initially in southern Scotland at Galashiels, before migrating south to Peterborough [Andrews: 1993]. Khoja Twelvers were amongst this enforced migration from whom a community was established successfully in Birmingham. Following the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran, there was an increase in Iranians in Europe, usually as refugees, numbering some 100,000 principally in France and Germany [Momem: 1985. 282].

The Twelver Shi'a tradition in the UK therefore, is composed of four principal streams of origin, with the first expression from the sub-continent as part of the post 1945 migration, a second from East Africa from 1972-74, which included Punjabi [ethnic Pakistani] people who settled in Manchester and Edinburgh, a third wave post 1978 and since of Iranian composition including students as temporary residents in Britain, with a subsequent fourth group from the Lebanon, Bahrain and Iraq, including in the latter group refugees from the anti-Shi'a Ba'athist nationalist regime.

This diversity was demonstrated in responses from the Twelver Shi'a representatives during the fieldwork interviews:

Respondent 1.1:

2. **The Muslim Community which you serve – would you describe their origins, cultural background, social/educational status in the UK?**

Mostly Iranian – Iraqi – students and p/g's in University in the UK.

3. **Do you identify with a particular tradition/*mashlaq* within Islam?**

Twelver Shi'a.

Respondent 1.2:

2. **The Muslim Community which you serve – would you describe their origins, cultural background, social/educational status in the UK?**

Here we are a community of Iranian, Iraqi – generally Middle Eastern people – most are to do with the Universities, others work here in the area

3. **Do you identify with a particular tradition/*mashlaq* within Islam?**

Twelver Shi'a.........

Respondent 1.3:

2. **The Muslim Community, which you serve – would you describe their origins, cultural background, and social/educational status in the UK?**

The people who support this masjid are mainly from East Africa – Khojas originally from India, who migrated to East Africa – they were ejected under the African Independence movements when the British left Africa thirty or forty years ago.......but we are Twelver Khojas........

3. **Do you identify with a particular tradition/*mashlaq* within Islam?**

Twelver Shi'a...........

Respondent 1.11

2. **The Muslim Community, which you serve – would you describe their origins, cultural background, social/educational status in the UK?**

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> Umbrella terms such as Christianity and Buddhism are deceptive. They tend to obscure the rich diversity of belief and practice to be found within these and other traditions.
>
> [Lewis & Slater: 1966. 2].

In addressing the place and understandings of 'Ali within two Muslim traditions both of whose adherents in the UK are predominantly of South Asian origin requires recognition of ideal types of regard for 'Ali and awareness of diversity of understandings for him. Rex [1988. 209] stressed that 15% of Pakistani origin UK Muslims would most likely be Shi'a in orientation. Qualitative field research offers awareness that the transmigration of traditions from the Indo/Pakistan sub-continent questions that there are clearly defined boundaries for distinct faiths, let alone for traditions within a particular faith.

Undertaking research in Religious Studies leads one to question whether a religious tradition as described in an academic text actually resembles the practices and expressed beliefs of the community under investigation. This is especially so in an examination of South Asian origin traditions of Islam.

> It is all very well for historians of religion to think, speak and write about Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism, but they rarely pause to consider if such clear-cut categories actually found expression in the consciousness, actions and cultural performances of the human actors that they describe.
>
> [Oberoi: 1994. 1].

Cantwell Smith argued that the emergence and description of Hindu traditions as 'Hinduism' and the recognition of Islam as a world faith was a part of the Western reification process of the Indian religious plurality of traditions [Smith: 1979. 130-133]. Oberoi [1998] confirms Smith's viewpoint that religious traditions evolved with interaction and derivation of ideas from one another [Smith: 1981. 15]. South Asia is characterised by religious eclecticism and plurality where there are less boundaries than borders between the contrasting traditions, which may be easily crossed. Saheb describes the attendance of Hindu devotees at the *urs* at Nagore-e-Sharif in Tamil Nadu alongside the Muslim pilgrims [Saheb: 1998. 72]

In addressing the understandings of 'Ali amongst the *Sunni* adherents of the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* and the *Twelver Shi'a* we confront both similarities of understanding and also a custom of disputation between the two expressions. An added complexity is that *Twelver Shi'ism* essentially originates outside the sub-continent and for its indigenisation within the Indo-Pakistan context holds the Iranian/Iraqi tradition of scholarship in high regard both historically and in the contemporary period. In the period both prior to and during the British administration the *ulama*, as has been noted *supra* for example in Lucknow created clear lines between *Shi'a* activities at Muharram and those of Sunni Muslims and of the majority Hindu people. Communalism and an eirenic spirit became key notes of this one *Shi'a* influenced state and 'Ali was put forward as the 'Prince of Believers' as much as Husayn was placed in the public arena as 'Prince of Martyrs' in distinctly *Shi'a* understandings. Opposition from the larger Sunni community was to emphasise that 'Ali was but one of the four 'Rightly Guided Caliphs' rashidun *khilafat*. By contrast, in Hyderabad Pinnault [1992. 160-161] points out that Hindu devotees and Sunni Muslims participated with their own understandings in the *Shi'a* ceremonies of Muharram.

The *ulama* who proposed an exclusive understanding of 'Ali as rightful successor to the Prophet and the invalidity of the previous three *khilafa* are stressing both a discrete understanding of *Imami Islam* in contrast to the *Sunni* tradition and therefore adhering to a rigid apprehension of truth and the transmission of that truth through the Imamate.

In contemporary Britain, the contrasting Muslim communities and traditions are confronted with their minority status, which is similar to the context of Islam in post-independence India. The *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* whilst contending that they have certainly formed the majority affiliation of Muslims in the UK are also rivalled by reformist and activist groups. Twelver Shi'a have again maintained their 'minority within a minority' standing.

Both traditions have faced the maintenance of their distinctive identities by a range of strategies in the *Public*, *Personal* and specifically *Symbolic* arenas.

Firstly, in the *Public* arena both in the South Asian as well as in the British context *julus* processions are used by both traditions to represent themselves to the Muslim community as a whole and to the wider British society. On *Milad ul Nabi* the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* are declaring their incontrovertible presence, are sacralising their immediate environment, and by the use of banners with Qur'anic inscriptions are specifically proclaiming Islam as a faith resident in the UK. Crucially, the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* are in addition making their distinctive identity known to the competitor Muslim movements as much as to the largely secular host culture.

In a parallel vein, the Twelver Shi'a communities use of Muharram and the processions for Ashura take a 'minority within a minority' group into the public arena by their processional declarations about Karbala and the deaths of Husayn and his followers. As has been noted, in South Asia such Muharram ceremonies have been the cause of intra-Muslim conflict [Pinnault: 1992. 153-159]. However, in Britain the Muharram *julus* and its associated symbols assist the Shi'a in affirming their group solidarity distinguishing them from the Sunni majority in a peaceful manner within both Manchester and Bradford contexts where field-work observation was carried out [1996, 1998, and 2000].

Equally in the public arena has been the development of the earliest visibly public sign of Muslim presence in the mosque building. In the first and second phases of migration into the UK, the mosque provided the space within which the festival and ritual activities could occur. Muslim identity in this period was nurtured in private and thereby to some extent away from overt hostility from either the wider society or a competitive movement.

In the process of writing this dissertation, the researcher has participated in three Muharram processions [Bradford 1996 and 1998, Manchester 2000], a *Milad ul Nabi* procession [Birmingham 1997] and an *Urs* anniversary [Hijaz College, Nuneaton 2000]. In the context of two major industrial cities the *julus* were both public statements of the sovereignty of *'Allah* over those districts and a means of *da'wah* recalling lapsed Muslims to their faith as well as explaining to the community in general the significance of the occasion by tract distribution and personal conversations.

general the significance of the occasion by tract distribution and personal conversations.

The *julus* for the *Milad* celebrations involved *dihkr* hence a vocal as much as a visual declaration of the day. The Muharram *julus* involved once more both the vocal elements of praising of the names of 'Ali and Husayn and the rhythmic chest beating *matam* in expression of grief for the martyrdoms at Karbala. The distribution of tract literature to bystanders and individual conversations, the carrying of banners and the *alams,* and the leading of the procession by a white horse representing Husayn's charger with its saddle pierced by arrows, are again overt public statements about the uniqueness of this Muslim expression.

The *urs* ceremonies, although conducted away from public streets, are again a means of sacralizing a sixty-two acre site in the UK for an Islamic University with the express purpose of training *'alim* for the British Muslim communities who have sympathy for a tradition that centres itself upon *pirs* and shrines. By drawing together a thousand participants in one locality over one and a half days, the movement is stressing ascendancy and claiming a place in both the Muslim public arena as much as in the public sphere. Both the *julus* experiences as well as the *'urs* allow scattered communities and individuals to meet, associate and to draw strength from the public *khutbah* as well as from one another. International links and contacts are also nourished and revived with participants from the sub-continent and other parts of the Islamic world in attendance, which stresses that a minority is in fact a part of an ascendant world faith. In sharing in such processions, Muslim people are crossing an ontological boundary of risk taking as the participants show themselves ready to identify themselves as Muslims, to be open to ridicule, to commit themselves to their benefactor and the most under privileged members of the community may participate. As such the event is an aspect of the experience of the *Hajj*.

In the *Personal* arena, the participation in a *julus* or an *urs* allows the individual believer to affirm his or her connection with the Muslim tradition and the undefeated nature of that tradition as it seeks if not a hegemony at least legitimacy for itself amidst wider Islam. The *julus* is a means of self-assertion, of building confidence and of identification. The identification is threefold in he UK context. Firstly, it is a means of claiming equality with other Muslim groups and secondly, it is seeking recognition for the community from public bodies whilst thirdly, on a personal basis it is stating the individual's readiness to be recognised.

In the third aspect, the *Symbolic* arena there are powerful forces to be disposed and understood. Underlying the processional witness and observation of festival in both traditions *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* and *Shi'a* respectively there are contrasting understandings of the *khilafat* in the immediate four successors of the Prophet Muhammad. The place of the Prophet by honouring his birthday, or the respect shown to the deceased *pir* on the anniversary *urs* of his death, are inscriptions upon a physical area as much as upon the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the participants of the charisma of the Prophet or the saint. A similar process is at work in the Muharram events with the focus upon 'Ali and Husayn, with the sufferings of *Ahl i-Bayt,* the Prophet's family. Whilst in British streets the cries of the Shi'a community are against Yazid, the Umayyad leader held responsible for the deaths of Husayn and his group, there is no public *tabarra,* in denunciation of the first three caliphs as has occurred in sub-continent Muharram ceremonies. However, tract materials, conversations and the there is no public *tabarra*, in denunciation of the first three caliphs as has occurred in sub-continent Muharram ceremonies. However, tract materials, conversations and the public demonstrations are to emphasise the suffering and injustice of Karbala at the behest of the worldly and nominally Muslim Umayyads. It has to be acknowledged however, that many Sufi influenced Muslims will also regard the Umayyads in a similar way to the Shi'a people.

Representative figures are also significant in the self-presentation of the respective traditions within Britain. For *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* adherents their UK based *pirs* derive their spiritual and moral authority from sub-continent *pirs* [Gilmartin: 1984. 221-240 & Werbner: 1996. 167-185]. From centres in the sub-continent such as Ajmeer, Ghamkol Sharif, and Allpur Sharif networks of relationships have evolved around South Asia and thence into Europe and specifically into Britain. The figures of living *pirs* in Britain nourish a sense of 'living presence' that revitalises Sufi influenced Islam. Twelver Shi'a have since the eighteenth century in Iran reacted against explicit Sufi practices albeit the awareness and teaching of *irfan* has been tacitly tolerated. Consequently, representative figures of Sufi *pirs* have not had the prominence found within Sunni Islam. Such key figures by which Shi'a communities define themselves are to found in the in the *Marja i-taqlids* those 'worthy of emulation', to whom devotion and financial support is committed by the Shi'a faithful. The place of the deceased *pir* becomes through his shrine centre a source of renewal of faith and blessing. The Shi'a believer expresses a parallel experience with both the invisible *Twelfth Imam,* whose presence may be anywhere and the localised presence of an Imam of saint in their shrine burial place.

Within the wider national and global *ummah* of Muslim people, the minority community of the Shi'a are culturally indistinguishable from the majority Sunni tradition. The significant differences are to be discovered in their respective mythic worldviews, in the rituals unique to each respective community, and in the attitudes from each tradition to the Prophet and his immediate family. Thus although there are dissimilarities between Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* there are also important commonalties of usage of religious symbols and ideas.

Schubel: 1993 cites an opinion that Shi'a and Sunni usages of key symbols within Islam can be characterised as a set of responses to both a man, the Prophet Muhammad, and to a text, the Qur'an [Schubel: 1993. 51-16]. For the Shi'a tradition, the evidence for the authority of the Qur'an is derived from the Prophet whose historical existence preceded that of the text. As such any faith was given to 'Allah as inspired by the Prophet's personality and then the message and not by reliance upon an established literary expression of that message. In addition, in Shi'a thought a human interpreter is an essential element for understanding and use of the Qur'an. This is expressed in the *Hadith al-Thaqalyn:*

> We say that all groups – Zaydites and Imamites – agree that the Prophet said, 'Verily I am leaving among you two objects of high estimation and of care [*thaqalyn*]: the Book of God and my near kindred, my family. They are my vicegerents after me, and they will not part from each other until they return at the Pool [*hawd*] [on the Day of Judgement].
>
> [Sachedina: 1981. 103].

By contrast, Sunni adherents would stress the reverse viz. that it is the text, which affirms the status of Muhammad as the Prophet and thus the Book takes precedence over the human agencies involved.

We are dealing here with symbols in both *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* and Twelver Shi'a understandings, which are vehicles for worldviews, experiences and understandings of the relationship between God and humankind. Geertz has defined religion as:

> A system of symbols which acts to establish powerful pervasive and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.
>
> [Geertz: 1973. 90-91].

5.10.1 The Ahl i-Bayt.

Both in textual and interview contexts, devotion and regard for the Prophet and the *Ahl i- Bayt* is central to Shi'a spirituality and a sub-text of *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* piety and thought. Overt respect for the family of the Prophet is transmitted in the Shi'a streams in Hodgson's term as ''Alid Loyalism' which forms a:

> ...varied complex of special religious attitudes associated with loyalty to the 'Alids [descendants of 'Ali] – not only reverence for the 'Alids themselves, but certain exalted ideas about Muhammad's person and the supposition of a secret teaching he transmitted especially to 'Ali and so on – whether these attitudes appear among Jama'at Sunnis or among those who, by explicitly rejecting the *jama'at*, identified themselves as Shi'is in the proper sense.
>
> [Hodgson: 1974. I. 372].

Both in Pakistan and North India as well as in Britain there is a common devotion to the 'Alid personalities, which is not limited to Shi'a communities but is to found amongst Sunni Muslims influenced by Sufism and hence the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at.* Ritual acts of respect are to be found amongst such Sunni Muslims within the UK. Maulana Azmiz of North Manchester Central *Masjid* [Interview 2.1.1] confirmed that respect would be shown to Husayn on the occasion of the Ashura 10th Day of Muharram within the confines of the mosque building in contrast to the public procession held to mark the events at Karbala 661 focused for example, at the JaffParia Islamic Centre, the Pakistani Shi'a *Masjid,* in South Manchester.

5.10.2 The Miraculous.

On some key points such as the debate about human free will, Shi'a thought converged with that of the Mu'tazilite School [Sachedina: 1981. 122]. Potentially dry and intellectually elitist, such debates would bear little appeal in broad terms to the faithful of either Sunni or Shi'a tendencies. For both Sufi focused Sunni and Shi'a people the place of the miraculous is significant in nurturing faith and piety. Thus adherents to both traditions hold the Prophet and 'Ali to be *ma'sum,* protected from sin and for the family of the Prophet to be participants in the *Nur Muhammadi* the Prophetic Light.

The miraculous is endemic to both popular Shi'ism and Sunni Sufi traditions. Common terms for miracles include *kharq-i 'adat* signifying a 'break with the habitual', *mu'jizat* 'miracle' or 'what renders others incapable to do the same', *and karamat* 'demonstrations of power'. *Mu'jizat* and *aya* became synonymous denoting miracles performed by Allah to prove the sincerity of the prophets. The Qur'an does not attribute miracles to the Prophet beyond that of the miracle of the Qur'an itself. Essentially, miracles of Allah are seen to confirm the sincerity of the prophetic line.

Karamat, linked with the root KRM appears frequently in the Qur'an deriving its significance from *karim* 'to be generous', one of the ninety-nine names of God. It is also linked with the Greek 'charisma' in the sense of a favour given by God abundantly and freely. More precisely however, *karamat* as a 'marvel' is associated with the *awliya* saints of God albeit such extraordinary events do not prove them to be equal with the prophets. Thus there is a clear distinction made in the Sufi manuals between *mu'jizat* and *karamat* [al-Sarradj: 1914. Chaps. 113-118; Kalabadhi: 1933. Chap. 26 and :nd. 158ff; & Hudjwiri: 1911. 218-239]. Whilst the signs *ayat* of the saints may resemble outwardly those of the prophets, those of the prophets are given with a sense of public challenge whilst the saints seek to maintain secrecy about their works. It was one of the accusations against Al-Hallaj that he divulged signs and marvels through which, in the eyes of his accusers he could aspire to the rank of a prophet.

It is clear from Sunni Sufi writings that the *mu'jizat* are an aid and confirmation to the prophet-messenger but as *karamat* they become sources of disquiet for the *awliya* or *pir,* who may be concerned that they prove to be illusory. In Kalabadhi's terms:

> ...they display towards God all the more humility, submission, godly fear, abasement and self-contempt, and all the more promptness in responding to God's claims over them.
>
> [Kalabadhi: 1933. 46].

Thus on the one hand the Sufi attitude is that such *karamat* are not to be sought after, and even mistrusted because to become attached to them would impede the path to union with God. On the other hand the biographies of Sufis are rich with supernatural charismatic activities and works.

Miracles are associated with the Imams in Twelver Shi'ism and most notably with 'Ali. In *Kitab al-Irshad,* Shaykh al-Mufid relates that 'Ali had perfect knowledge from childhood, that he spoke from the cradle, whilst his remarkable physical and military successes were due to divine intervention [al-Mufid: nd. 229]. As-Suyuti attributes to 'Ali both the working of saintly marvels *karamat* alongside *mu'jizat* as miracles of prophets.

> He is incomparable as a saint; he works miracles [karamat] which his adherents do not hesitate to compare to the miracles of the prophets [mu'jizat]...At Sabba' God made the Sun to come back after it had set, to enable 'Ali to finish the *'asr* prayer; in the mosque at Kufa he restored the severed hand of a negro whom he had sentenced to the punishment which canonical law inflicts on thieves...
>
> [As-Suyuti, 1977. 185].

Other miracles are attributed to the Imams such as the seventh Musa Kazim [129/746-183/799], who is regarded as the author of some twenty-three miraculous events. Donaldson relates the account that Imam Musa had been challenged with a rival claim to the Imamate by Abdullah al- Aftah, an elder brother and the oldest surviving son of as-Sadiq of the sixth Imam, Ja'far as-Sadiq. Musa directed that a large pile of firewood should be collected in a courtyard where with others his brother was invited to attend. Whilst they sat repeating traditions, Imam Musa ordered that the firewood be set alight and then before them all he went and stood in the midst of the flames with neither harm to himself nor to his clothes. Musa then called upon his brother to repeat the same experience if he felt that his claim to the Imamate was valid. The tradition relaters that Abdullah lost his colour and left the gathering [Donaldson: 1933. 154].

Rizvi in quoting al-Hilli connects the designation *nass* of an Imam with the capacity to perform miracles *mu'jizat* as a confirmation of a claim to the office of the Imam [Rizvi: 1985. 47 & al-Hilli: 1958. 69].

The key purpose of the miraculous according to al-Mufid is to demonstrate the spiritual authority of the Imam in question. In a parallel way Sufi *pirs* and saints would be seen as demonstrating their spiritual power and capacity to bestow blessing. Accounts state of such people that 'he was heard when he prayed' or 'what he said would definitely come true' [Jami: 1957. 506]. However, one of the main gifts of a Sufi *pir* would be discernment *firasa* with countless stories being related about a shaykh's insight into the soul of his disciple distinguishing hopes, fears, pride and hypocrisy [Schimmel: 1975. 205]. In many miracle stories the focus is upon conversion and holding to the tenets of the faith. Ad-Daylami relates a story of Abu'l Adyan from the tenth century that in debate with a Zoroastrian he said he could walk through fire unharmed because fire would only burn with God's permission. He did so pass through the fire proving the axiom of Ash'arite belief that there is no real causality but that God gives or withholds the elements to which humankind has become accustomed [Ad-Daylami: 1955. 179].

Both Shi'a and Sunni Sufi influenced movements such as the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* used the figures of 'Ali and the Imams and the parallel personalities of the *pirs* and *walis* as means to create a response to the breakdowns of Islamic ideal order. Thus adherence to the charismatic and eternal line of 'Ali on the one hand and on the other a series of lines of equally charismatic saints, who would renew the faith of the community.

5.10.3 *Nafs*: Soul friendship with God and 'Ali.

The event of Ghadir Khumm, which is celebrated by Twelver Shi'a and all Shi'a streams into the modern period is significant for the naming of 'Ali as the *mawla* of the Prophet.

> The narrative states that while returning from his final pilgrimage to Mecca the Prophet stopped at the well at Ghadir Khumm and asked the crowd accompanying him: 'Am I not closer to you than you are to yourselves?' The crowd answered in the affirmative, and the Prophet said: 'I leave you two things that if you hold to them you shall not err. One is the book of God and the other is my *Ahl al-Bayt'*. He then called 'Ali up in front of the crowd and said 'Whoever I am the *mawla* of, this man 'Ali is his *mawla.* Oh God, befriend whoever befriends him and be hostile to whomever is hostile to him and support whomever supports him and desert whomever deserts him'
>
> [Al-Mufid: n.d. 125]

The term *mawla* embraces both the sense of 'friend' and 'master. Clearly for the Shi'a this implies that the Prophet had designated his cousin and son-in-law as his successor, politically and spiritually. Thus the state of being a friend of God is placed on an equal footing with being a friend of 'Ali. A further sign of the intimacy between the Prophet and 'Ali used by both Shi'a and Sufi influenced Sunnis concerns the night of the *hijrah* from Makka to Madhina. Being informed by angelic messenger of the Quash plot to murder him in his sleep, the Prophet went to 'Ali requesting him to take his place in his bed thereby concealing his departure. Majlisi records that 'Ali having asked if this will ensure the safety of the Prophet, laughs, falls to the ground in adoration and thanks God for the privilege of risking his own life for the sake of the Prophet.

> Go wherever God has commanded; let me be your sacrifice. Order what you please and on my life I will do it; and in this and in every other matter I supplicate the grace of God.
>
> [Riza: 1983. 25].

Parallels can immediately be drawn between this relationship and that of Ibrahim and 'Isma'il with his willingness to be sacrificed by his father. This action is also taken as a reference to S 2. 208:

> But there are others who would give away their lives in order to find favour with God. God is compassionate to His servants.
>
> [2. 208].

The action attributed to 'Ali is used as a paradigm for full submission to God's will. By giving his own safety and soul to the Prophet, 'Ali has in a parallel sense given his soul *nafs* to God.

> Before [this night] it was the *nafs* [soul] of 'Ali, but after that night of the Hijrah this *nafs* no longer remained 'Ali's. Rather the *nafs* of 'Ali became the *nafs* of Allah; where it was the hand of 'Ali it has become the hand of Allah; Where it was the tongue of 'Ali it has become the tongue of Allah; where it was the eyes of 'Ali they have become the eyes of God...Who is like this 'Ali...whose intention are God's intentions?
>
> [Riza: 1983. 25].

There are close similarities between Shi'a perceptions and those of Sufi influenced piety. This is a pattern within Sufi practices for the transformation of the *nafs* by devotion to the shaykh, who functions as a metaphor for the Prophet Muhammad so that the individual believer is brought into a full and correct spiritual relationship with God's intentions and purpose for the moral order of humankind. Thus the Sufi pathway and pattern of *vilayat-i murshid* [devotion to the spiritual master] leads to *vilayat-i rasul* [devotion to the Prophet] *and* thence to *vilayat –i Khuda* [devotion to God].

Consequently, as Muhammad is seen as the moral pivot of the universe and the beloved of God, then 'Ali is seen as the best example of devotion to the Prophet and thence to God. An understanding therefore of the relationship is seen in both Shi'a and Sufi traditions as essential for those who wish to live a profound spiritual life. So, once more their relationship is seen as a paradigm for that between the Sufi shaykh and his disciple *murid* in the condition of *fana fi-shaykh,* in which the *nafs* of the disciple is lost in the identity of the *pir.*

Both Shi'a and Sunni traditions use narratives to illustrate this relationship between the Prophet and 'Ali. One common tradition refers to the birth of 'Ali within the Ka'aba. Following his birth, the Prophet entered the building and once he had touched his tongue to 'Ali's, the infant is said to have recited the *shahadah,* or according to other traditions to have recited a verse of the Qur'an. In this way, 'Ali is identified with the infant Jesus in the Qur'an who is depicted as giving revelations from the cradle [Lalljee: 1991.5-6 & al-Mufid: n.d. 40]. Yet more popular is the narrative of the siege of the Fort of Khaybar. In the English language biographies of 'Ali there is a comparable reliance on traditions in relating the account. For example, Chirri relates:

> The Holy Prophet was saddened to see that his general offensive in two consecutive days had failed. He decided, therefore, to bring a drastic solution to the problem, and 'Ali's leadership was the only solution. The two sheikhs, Al-Bukhari and Muslim, inform us in their two Sahihs [Authentics] of what took place. They recorded that Asahl Ibn Saad, [a prominent companion] said:
> 'The Messenger of God said at Kheibar: I shall give this banner to a man through whom God will bring victory. He loves God and His Messenger, and God and His Messenger love him'.
> The companions spent the night asking each other: 'Who is this man whom the Prophet meant?' They came in the morning to the Messenger and every one of them was hoping that he would be the man of the banner. 'Where is Ali Ibn Abu Talib?' the Prophet asked. 'He is suffering from inflammation of the eyes,' they said. The Prophet sent for him. When 'Ali was brought to the Prophet he treated 'Ali's eyes with his blessed saliva and prayed for him. 'Ali's eyes were cured instantly as if they did not have any inflammation.
> The Prophet gave 'Ali the banner and 'Ali asked: 'Messenger of God, shall I fight them until they become Muslims like us?' The Messenger said: 'Go on, until you reach their dwelling. Invite them to Islam and inform them of their duty towards God and Islam. By God, if he leads one man through you to the right road, it would be better for you than to own a precious wealth.' [Sahih Bukhari, Part 5, 171 & Muslim Sahih, Part 15, 178-179].
> 'Ali went on, carrying the banner and contrary to the conventional way, he literally led the army...Abu Rafi a companion of the Prophet said:
> 'We went with Ali ibn Abu Talib when the Messenger of God sent him with his banner. When he came near the fortress, the dwellers of the fortress came out and he fought them. A man from them hit 'Ali and made him lose his shield. 'Ali took a door at the fortress and shielded himself with it. He kept it in his hand until the battle ended. I found myself with seven men trying to move that door, but we could not.
>
> [Chirri: 1996. 108-110].

By virtue of this victory; Ali was given the title *Mushkil Kusha* 'Remover of Difficulties', with the connotation that 'Ali may be addressed as a helper: *Ya 'Ali Madad,* 'Oh help, 'Ali!' by both Shi'a and Sunni Sufi faithful alike. In portrayals of the personality of 'Ali from Shi'ite and Sunni Sufi sources alike there is idealized stress upon his wisdom and his service as counsellor and judge *qadi* to the preceding *khilafat,* his scholarship and thirdly his military prowess. In this latter area his sword *Dhu'l i-Fiqar* symbolises his strength. Certainly in the realm of myth and legend, the personal sword is one of the cherished possessions of a heroic figure [Renard: 1993. 54]. It often served as a talisman and was endowed with supernatural qualities as its appointed hero-owner could only at times lift it.

For example, only Arthur could take Excalibur from the stone. Sigmund alone could lift Gram from the Brownstock Oak. Perseus, Achilles, Finn Heindall, Arjuna, Tethra and Isonokami all possessed supernatural swords. Such weapons spoke, raised the wind, made the owner invisible, grow in stature, and enable them to travel. Such weapons also represented chastity, dedication and truth whereas if untruth occurred then they might run with blood [Leach: 1972. 1094]. For 'Ali the sword *Dhu'l i-Fiqar,* given to him by the Prophet after the Battle of Badr [623] exemplified manliness, leadership, and protection for his whole community male and female [at-Tabari 1879-1901: VII. 84-85].

5.10.4 The Concept of Light: *Nur.*

The relationship between the Prophet and 'Ali in both Shi'ite and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* traditions is not simply one of a political character but also metaphysical. Traditions and biographies speak of the closeness of the two. To 'Ali is attributed this saying:

> When I asked God's Messenger for anything he gave it to me, and when I said nothing he was the first to speak.

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> The breath of the Lion of God ['Ali] travelled to China; because of his knowledge, the navel of the deer became fragrant with musk.
>
> For this reason it has been said: become a just and pious person, from Yathrib go to China in search of knowledge.
>
> Leo is the navel [centre] of the house of the sun [Zodiac], from the deer its breath is like pure musk. I speak incorrectly, it is not the musk from Cathay, but from its namesake, the Lion of God.
>
> Were his knowledge to be illustrated by the sea, the Black Sea would be a single drop in it.
>
> [Attar: 1960. XXIII, 3, 15-20]

There is a consensus between Shi'a and Sunni that 'Ali is the source of knowledge and possesses a unique ability to interpret the Qur'anic revelation. The Prophet received *tanzil* whilst 'Ali received *ta'wil.* Sufi estimates of him accordingly are high considering him to be *insan-i kamil:*

> His renown and rank in this Path [of Sufism] were very high. He explained the principles [*usul*] of Divine truth with exceeding subtlety, so that Junayd said: " 'Ali is our Shaykh as regards the principles and as regards the endurance of affliction". i.e in the theory and practice of Sufism; for Sufis call the theory of this Path 'principles' [*usul*], and its practice consists entirely in the endurance of affliction.
>
> [Hujwiri: 1959. 74]

5.10.5 *Ma'sum*: Protected from sin.

The metaphysical status of the Prophet and 'Ali has been touched upon *supra* and is particularly made clear in the Hadith which has the prophets stating that he and 'Ali shared a pre-existence before the creation of the universe. As this Hadith portrays the account the Prophet is reported to have said that God had created a light even before the creation of the world and that both he and 'Ali were taken from this primordial light. The light was then placed within Adam and passed uncorrupted through the line of Ibrahim until it reached and was divided between Abu Talib and 'Abdullah the respective fathers of Muhammad and 'Ali. The light was united once more when 'Ali married the Prophet's daughter Fatima, separating with the birth of her two sons by 'Ali, Hasan and Husayn [Chisti: 1983. 37-38]. This in Shi'a thought leads to understanding the line of the Imams through and including the Prophet, 'Ali and Fatima to be *ma'sum* 'impeccable' and protected from sin.

In this proposition the Shi'a are more emphatic than representatives for example of a Sunni tradition such as the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at.* The reasoning is that since a Prophet is superior to an *Imam,* he must logically be sinless. A foundational Qur'anic text is:

> When his Lord put Abraham to the proof by enjoining on him certain commandments and Abraham fulfilled them, He said: 'I have appointed you a leader of mankind'. 'And what of my descendants?' asked Abraham. 'My covenant does not apply to the evil-doers'.
>
> [S. 2. 124].

A 'wrong doer' according to interpretation of this verse cannot be an *Imam.* Donaldson traces this concept as unique to Shi'ism dating its development to between 632/11 – 865/256 in other words between the death of the Prophet and the occultation of the Twelfth Imam [Donaldson: 1933. 335]. Donaldson continues to affirm that according to al-Majlisi, al-Kulaini, and al-Mufid it was Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq [699/80-148/765] who used an exegesis of Surah 2. 18:

Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will never return to the right path.

...is demonstrating that Abraham must have been sinless for him to be appointed by God as an *Imam* and that as a consequence 'the foolish cannot be leaders of the righteous'. As these three traditionists lived during the Buwaihid ascendancy [334-440], it seems clear that the understanding of the sinlessness of the prophetic and Imamate line evolved fully in this time amongst the Shi'ite communities. Donaldson continues to argue that as a clear Shi'a doctrinal statement the concept emerged in Sayyid al-Murtada, the 'Alma al-Hula's *Tabsiratu'l'-Awwam* in which he refutes the Sunni reluctance to accept the impeccability of the Imamate.

The belief in the *isma* is not referred to in the canonical *Hadith.* It is however, mentioned in the Fish Ahrar II shortly after al-Kulaini had included it in the traditions from the Imams [al-Kulaini: 1889. I. 98].

Sunni authors would hold the same to be true of the Prophet and 'Ali although there is debate as to how quickly such an understanding developed amongst them. Al-Ghazzali [1058/450-1111/505]for example, was reluctant to accept the doctrine of the prophetic and Imamate sinlessness. In his *Ihya 'ulum al-Din* he notes that no one is immune from sin even the prophets, as the Qur'an does relate their sin and errors with consequent repentance [al-Ghazzali: 1939. IV. 9]. Yet whilst acknowledging the possibility of the Prophet's errors he also warns against an understanding of the sinfulness of the prophets because they should be admitted and imitated. Thus, al-Ghazzali does not propose anyone to be infallible accepting that all are subject to minor sins.

> The Prophet, peace be upon him, has said, 'There is a covering of sin on my heart until I have asked God's forgiveness seventy times during the day and night.' And for this confession the Most High honoured him when he said, 'May God forgive your former and latter sins.' Therefore, if this was true of the Prophet, what must be the condition of others?
>
> [Al-Ghazzali: 1939. IV. 5-6].

A century later however, al-Razi [d.1209/606] was an influential supporter of the perspective that the prophets were protected from sin. In both his Qur'anic commentary and the text *Ismatu'l -Anbiya* 'The Sinlessness of the Prophets' Al-Razi approached each acknowledged prophet in turn to support his case [Donaldson: 1933. 337]. Significant factors here are that Al-Razi like his predecessor al-Ghazzali was from within the Shafi'i School of law and again they were both influenced by Sufi methods of speculation. The Sufi traditions acted as an informal set of channels for the interchange of ideas between the Sunni and Shi'a broader streams of belief and practice. It is possible to speculate reliably that for example, Sufic ideas did percolate through into accepted patterns of Sunni belief especially where it reflected devotion to the figure of the Prophet and his family and belief for example, that the Prophet's abilities included not casting a shadow, seeing both before and behind him, and vision in the dark. Such ascriptions to Muhammad coincided well with the evolution of the 'light of Muhammad' beliefs but they also can be linked with the early Shi'a propositions that if the prophets were protected from sin then the Prophet could not be inferior to their status and must consequently possess a similar quality. Al-Razi therefore provided a 'junction point' for the concepts of *ma'sum* to be included in the Sunni consensus *ijma'*. The Mu'tazilite influence was to add that the prophets could not be conceived of as being capable of committing 'great sins' but inconsequential errors could be accepted.

In considering the *ma'sum* nature of the prophetic line, of the Prophet himself, and in the line of the Imamate there is a classic pattern of parallel evolutions of ideas, with some cross-fertilisation and derivation of concepts mediated by Sufi and Mu'tazilite streams. In developing the *ma'sum* nature of the Prophet and of 'Ali, and thence their descendants, the Shi'a are developing their distinctive emphasis of the charismatic individual with absolute authority and Sunni traditions are stressing the nature of the *ummah's* authority. In the former the figure of 'Ali will have predominance as elected by God whilst in the latter and majority expression he will be acknowledged but seen as subject to the election of the community. In this portrayal, the issue of *ma'sum* will also have a political quality. The necessity of an impeccable and indeed infallible figure or the means to find such assurance of access to truth and guidance was and continues to be critical for Islam, as it became a substitute for the discontinuance of divine revelation after the death of the Prophet Muhammad.

5.11 Self-definition and Sacralisation.

As has been indicated, the majority of the Muslim communities within the UK owe their 'society of origin' identity primarily to South Asia and thus to its antecedent historico-theological contexts.

In the sub-continent relations between the Sunni and Shi'a communities have been marked at times by tolerance, enmity, rivalry, and explicit antagonism [Hasnain & Husain: 1988. 168]. Exacerbating these tensions and the intensity of the intra-communal conflict have been issues embedded in the earliest history of the Muslim community and transmitted through the centuries as sources of division. These embrace for the Shi'a the understanding that 'Ali is perceived as the supplanted rightful successor of the Prophet, and thence the perception not only of the martyrdom of Husayn but also of his older brother and the successive line of Imams at the hands of oppressive and but nominally Muslim rulers. For Sunni traditions such perspectives upon the primacy of 'Ali and the line of the Imamate contribute to the unnecessary elitism of such a view and to the neglect of the charismatic nature of the *ummah* of Islam.

The work of Mol can contribute creatively at this juncture in understanding the respective use of these key symbols and figures of 'Ali, the Prophet, their family and commemorations of the *milad ul nabi* as well as that of Ashura. Mol's proposition is that,

> ...religion is the sacralization of identity and that the mechanisms of sacralization consist of objectification, commitment, ritual and myth.

[Mol: 1976. 1].

'Sacralization' of identity is where religious symbols come to enfold an eternal quality and it continues as a process that,

> ...safeguards identity, a system of meaning or a definition of reality, and modifies, obstructs, or [if necessary] legitimates change.
>
> [Mol: 1976. 6].

The objectification element is particularly significant in the issue of the key symbols and their meanings that unite and divide Shi'a and Sunni such as *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* streams. Such an element is a means whereby the diverse and disparate aspects of life made 'more orderly, more consistent, and more timeless' [Mol: 1976.214]. Linked to this is the matter of commitment as reinforced by ritual, which creates group affiliation and a sense of personal well-being and belonging. Rituals also undergird doctrines and enable participants to live in a subjunctive sense 'as if' they were present at some key event in past history. Mol's fourth dimension of sacralization is myth, which enable an explanation of reality and human experience to occur for individuals and communities. As such 'myths' are repeated annually they can create an emotional response and cause a fresh commitment to faith. Such multiple processes can be observed as being integral to the Shi'a useages of the figures of 'Ali [and Husayn] in Muharram as means to understand their frequent status in history as an oppressed minority but with a clear eschatological hope. For Sufi influenced Sunni adherents, 'Ali represents less explicitly than with the Shi'ite communities other aspects of belief and action, the source of Sufi *pir* knowledge and a steadfastness against compromising faith.

Within the sub-continent, Muslims were a minority ruling body and even more conscious of that minority and supplicant status with the advent of British rule in the mid nineteenth century. Into this configuration of multiple identities and understandings of their history, Muslims of both traditions were also identified by their varying economic statuses.

Such a diverse intra-communal set of understandings and relations has to some extent transferred to the British context in the migration of Muslim people from the sub-continent. It is evident however, that the singular violent strife characteristic of Muharram Processions in South Asia [Hasnain & Husnain: 1988. 169] are absent from the UK context. Confronting Shi'a and Sunni Muslim alike since the major migrations of the post-1945 and pre-1962 periods has been the issue of developing an economic identity, maintaining familial and religious customs in an initially hostile or uncomprehending environment, and discovering a public voice for pan-Muslim concerns [Gilliat: 1997. 99]. This softening of intra-communal relationships has been enhanced by the influence upon first generation of migrants from northern India and then Pakistan of Sufi teaching and models that integrate positive regard for the Prophet's family together with an awareness of charismatic individuals whether as *pirs* or the *Imams* in the practice of their faith. The Shi'a communities, as migrated to the UK, are composed from the diverse representation of global Shi'ism. This embraces elements from the same cultural and geographical background as communities of the Sunni tradition but also significant elements from East Africa, the Khoja Twelver expression, Iran, the Gulf States, and the eastern Mediterranean basin. A consequence is the heterogeneity of the tradition as it exists in the heterogeneous society of Britain. The additional practice of *taqiyya* amongst Shi'ite people has also led to less explicit confrontation between the two traditions in the new context.

For the Shi'a the historic symbols of the rights of 'Ali's succession, the grief of Karbala, the Muharram mourning ceremonies and the impeccability of the Imamate continue as public self-presentations of their ideals and eschatological hopes. These are theological issues that have become political concepts, which in turn give pivotal coherence to an often-suppressed movement and expresses the aspiration for the dispensation of justice at the hands of the Promised Imam. The Shi'a have always been confronted with forming their self-understanding and have used their key symbols in reaction to the 'Other', which has invariably been the 'Other Islam' of the majority. [Dabashi: 1989. 107]. In the British context such self-defining cannot be promulgated in violent confrontation when the surrounding society ambiguously provides both protection for the faith and its expression but also prohibits public confrontation between rivals.

Sufi influenced Sunnism such as the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* can embrace 'Ali, and the family of the Prophet as for example, *ma'sum* within its own structure of inspired saints and sages. Both are means of maintaining a form of continuous revelation within strict Qur'anic restrictions. The one utilises the line of the Imamate and the tradition of the jurist with his intervention into politics exemplified in the 1979 Iranian Revolution and tacitly admired by Sunni representatives. The other draws upon the consensus of the community and its ability to formulate contemporary responses to modern life. In the UK moreover, such traditions as the Shi'a, the Sunni and specifically the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* are engaged in self-definition less against one another than against the 'Other' of Britain, which is evidently and paradoxically hospitable to Islam.

Chapter 6.

Research Results from fieldwork: Imam "Ali in Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* devotion and understanding – Key Concepts and Typology.

6.1 Models of Opposition.

Historically, the issue of 'Ali's authority within the *ummah* after the Prophet's death on June 8th 11/632 became a significant factor in the formulation of a socio-religious ideology in Islam. The question presented itself as to whether his leadership was limited to the secular political domain for the few years that he served as caliph or did it begin with the Prophet's death and extend over religious as much as temporal areas. Consequently therefore, was it of a more enduring nature and quality?

If 'Ali's authority was merely political its influence was ephemeral and subsequently ended, as had the rule of the other caliphs, with death. If however, it had a spiritual dimension its power and nature was of a more enduring character and one that could be transmitted to successors, who would hold a similar office.

The matter of 'Ali's authority historically polarised the *ummah* in its search for solutions in arranging and regulating their socio-political as much as their spiritual life until the modern age. According to historical sources [al-Sharastani: 1979. 1. 213-214 & al-Ya'qubi: 1883. 2.103] 'Ali's claim to succeed the prophet was supported by a group of prominent first generation convert Muslims, who were not from the Quraysh tribal grouping, 'Abbas ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib, the Prophet's uncle, Fadl ibn

'Abbas, Zubayr ibn 'Awam, Khalid ibn Sa'd, Miqdad ibn 'Amr, Salman the Persian, Abu Dharr al-Ghifari, 'Umm ibn Easier, Bra' ibn 'Alibi, and 'Abi ibn Na'ib. They represented a profile of pious, diverse, non-tribal affiliated groups, who were supportive of 'Ali and devoted to the Prophet's teachings and ideals of Islam.

The origins of the Shi'a have been attributed by Tabataba'i to:

> [1] the subversive thoughts of a certain Saba; [2] the Persian scheme to revenge the defeat of the Sassanids by creating division within Islam; [3] a Zoroastrian invention with a similar purpose; [4] an invention of the Shi'ite Imams to claim religious authority; or to [5] a Safavid invention to legitimise their dynasty.
>
> [Tabataba'i: 1969. 9-10].

Goldhizer states that:

> ...from the very beginning there was a party of highly respected Muslims who were dissatisfied with the manner in which, in disregard of degrees of kinship to the Prophet's family, the caliphate had been bestowed upon Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman, the first three men to hold it. Accordingly, they would have preferred to elevate 'Ali to the caliphate.
>
> [Goldhizer: 1981. 169].

In Goldhizer's opinion there was an expression of Shi'a sentiment during the rule of 'Uthman [23/644 - 35/656] but that their views had been present during the entire period of the four 'rightly guided caliphs' [Goldhizer: 1981. 174-175]. The firm resistance to 'Ali in his lifetime and towards the family of the Prophet with subsequent Umayyad persecution of adherents to the 'Alid cause affirms that this view of the succession to the Prophet existed early in Islamic history. There is evidence offered by Ibn al-Athir [1851-1876. 3. 422-423, 441, 447, 450] and al-

Mas'udi [1977. II.] of Umayyad pressure upon Shi'a sympathisers, which even if exaggerated by the 'Abassids can be recognised by Goldhizer's assessment that the Umayyad period was largely 'a scandal to pietists' [Goldhizer: 1981. 177].

Consequently, the most realistic alternatives to the increasingly worldly and centralising policies of the Umayyad dynasty based in Damascus were offered by two movements within the nascent but expansionist Islamic power. The partisans or party of 'Ali the *Shi'at 'Ali* or *Shi'a,* and the emerging *Sufi* movements in their first stage of development.

In one sense they were parallel movements of protest against what their respective adherents perceived as moral degeneration and immoral political authority used contrary to the true interests of the *ummah.* They were also to draw upon and to utilise common images and concepts rooted in the very beginnings of Islam.

6.2 The Charisma of 'Ali: the Shi'a perspective.

Contemporary Shi'ism can be found in its Twelver form in every part of the Middle East, Europe and North America. They form almost the total population of Iran, 55% of Iraq, 70% of Bahrain and 33% of the Lebanon. In all some 11% of the global community of Islam is estimated to be Twelver Shi'a.

In most respects the Shi'a differ little from the Sunni tradition – they too have a body of Hadith, which supplement the Qur'an; they adhere to the same five ritual practices: declaration of the faith, fasting, pilgrimage, prayer, and charity. There are differences in inheritance law – within Shi'ism a woman may inherit her father's property if there are no brothers, and temporary marriage *mut'a* is permitted.

Ritual differences are more noticeable: in the *Adhan* a third tenet may be added by the Shi'a that "Ali is the *wali'* friend of God'. In addition there are added pilgrimages to the sites of the Imams' burial shrines and their immediate family members' tombs: Najaf, Karbala, Samarra, Mashad and Qom.

The focus which these statements and practices represent is upon the key and sanctified person of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib and his descendants. These constitute a lineage of charismatic and redemptive figures, which offer a means of access to the Prophet and thence to God for the believer. The logic of Shi'a belief is both straightforward and complex. In his lifetime the Prophet was the essential Guide for the faithful to God. After his passing however, who were people to follow? A radical group such as the Kharijites proposed that a worthy successor would be found viz one who in piety and learning would be elected the guide. Like the Shi'a they opposed the gradual delegitimisation of authority after the Prophet's death from his immediate family line. The Shi'a however, could not countenance the concept of election by and from the *ummah* of one however pious and learned. Their stress would be that humankind needed a person and an argument beyond contention, who would lead and guide humankind to God. Massignon terms this 'apodictic proof' – in Persian *hojjat,* an argument or proof beyond contradiction.

Shi'a respondents in the fieldwork concurred on the appointment of 'Ali by the Prophet at Ghadir Khumm in 11/632 and maintained their traditional estimate of him as the one supplanted by Abu Bakr in a rightful succession:

Respondent 1.1:

6. **At Ghadir Khumm, Shi'a traditions assert that the Prophet appointed 'Ali as his immediate successor. What is your understanding of this perception of the succession to the *Khilafat*?**

Clearly, from Hadith attested to and used by Sunni scholars there is the designation 'nass' by the Prophet of Hazrat 'Ali........no-one can actually deny that this occurred.........the Sunni make 'Ali one of the 'righteous caliphs' but he is definitely passed over when the Prophet Pbuh died........

Respondent 1.2:

6. **At Ghadir Khumm, Shi'a traditions assert that the Prophet appointed 'Ali as his immediate successor. What is your understanding of this perception of the succession to the *Khilafat*?**

These yes, traditions are very clear. You will find them recorded by Sunni Hadith collectors as well as amongst Shi'a traditions. So I cannot see the difficulty that Sunni scholars and people have about accepting that 'Ali was the rightfully appointed successor to the Prophet.

This time is attested to by both Shi'a and Sunni sources – it would have been unthinkable for the Prophet to have called away so many people together [his last Hajj] in such heat and for him not to have made some significant statement. It was however, one of several occasions when the Prophet designated 'Ali as successor. He was not elected as leader but clearly appointed.

Respondent 1.4:

6. **At Ghadir Khumm, Shi'a traditions assert that the Prophet appointed 'Ali as his immediate successor. What is your understanding of this perception of the succession to the *Khilafat*?**

This is definitely attested incident and Hadith.......which Sunni scholars and traditionists affirm as well........it's when the succession to the family of the Prophet was confirmed To have a clear presentation of this scene and its implications I suggest you read Madelung's 'Succession to the Prophet'.

In his lifetime, the Prophet had been such a clear light that he was incontrovertibly the Guide. Once he was removed by death, humanity would not have such clarity of guidance and there would be tendencies to reject Islam and the 'straight path'. If evidence were needed of this then one need only consider the tensions and rivalries that emerged after the Prophet's demise. For the Shi'a a living guide as much as the sacred text of the Qur'an was essential, and this person's charisma would ensure that humanity would be guided towards righteousness and order.

Shi'a respondents affirmed the continued necessity of the 'Guide' role of the Imamate in the fieldwork:

Respondent 1.5:

8.I understand that an Imam is both a guide *Hadi* and a Proof *Hujja.* Can you please explain these two concepts?

Everyone needs an guide……without the Imams and the Twelfth Imam you do not have a guide…….even salvation…….

Respondent 1.6:

8.I understand that an Imam is both a guide *Hadi* and a Proof *Hujja.* Can you please explain these two concepts?

God provides every generation with guides and in the Imams and especially the Last Imam who will return we have a guide for the world…..we do not know when he will return…he may be with us on the procession sitting there invisible….but he is our guide….without accepting him salvation is impossible for men and women…..

Such a person would by definition need to be of the line of the Prophet such was the importance of the sense of noble blood and inheritance of his qualities. As he had no surviving sons then the nearest and closest figure in his line was 'Ali ibn Abu Talib, cousin, son-in-law and foster brother. One of the first to accept Islam, and in Shi'a perspective the first male to do so, 'Ali had been a firm supporter and military aide to the Prophet. For the descendants of 'Ali through his eldest son, Hasan the title *sharif* is accorded by all Muslims and for those through his younger son, Husayn *sayyid* is given as an honoured title again by all. Sunnis will give respect to these two sons of 'Ali and affirm that some if not all such descendants may show special spiritual qualities and deserve respect from believers.

The Shi'a however, go much further than this approach. For the Shi'a, 'Ali has qualities that go beyond the mere human – such that he becomes a charismatic and compelling figure. A Gnostic Shi'a text has him stating:

> 'I am the Sign of the All-Powerful, I am the First and the Last. I am the manifest and the Hidden. I am the Face of God. I am the Hand of God. I am the Side of God...I am he who keeps the secret of God's Messenger'.
>
> [Corbin: 1971-72. Vol 1: 96]

Within Shi'a perception this unique charisma was transmitted from the Prophet to each of his descendants in every generation. Thus a hereditary Imam was provided for each generation with qualities that protected him from sin *mas'um* and granted infallibility in his words. Massignon states that the Imam:

> '...is divinized a priori. He need not examine his own heart, and his intentions must not be questioned. Everything his tongue utters is sacred...The inspired one, in his very whims, is revered as the personal mask through which the incomprehensible arbitrariness of the creator is shown...'
>
> [Massignon: 1982. Vol 3. 35]

Respondent 1.4:

4. **There is a high estimate of Imam 'Ali within contrasting traditions of Islam....eg: ''Ali is the Gate to the City of Knowledge'.**

Is this your perception of Hazrat 'Ali....? Do you hold to a similar devotion? to the Holy Family around the Prophet?

'There is a very high estimate of Imam 'Ali in our tradition – he is seen as the closest kin to the Prophet, having been brought up from an early age with the Prophet in his own household. So he would have received from him an enormous amount of knowledge – both open and secret awareness.

Respondent 1.7:

4. **There is a high estimate of Imam 'Ali within contrasting traditions of Islam....eg: ''Ali is the Gate to the City of Knowledge'.**

Is this your perception of Hazrat 'Ali....? Do you hold to a similar devotion? to the Holy Family around the Prophet?

O yes......I weep when we hear the accounts of 'Ali and the deaths of his two sons..He is to be seen as the source of knowledge....spiritual and human....do you know he is a grammarian, an astronomer, a scholar of the Qur'an.......and a wise judge?

Respondent 1.9:

4. **There is a high estimate of Imam 'Ali within contrasting traditions of Islam....eg: ''Ali is the Gate to the City of Knowledge'.**

Is this your perception of Hazrat 'Ali....? Do you hold to a similar devotion? to the Holy Family around the Prophet?

The questions were answered in conjunction with a visiting Ayatollah Haeri from Qum.

The true Sufism is in fact in the Shi'a awareness of faith and insight into Hazrat 'Ali. So 'Ali is the source of knowledge both spiritual as well as general – he is honoured as a source of law, science, and for the Prophet as well.

For the Shi'a this status for 'Ali as the direct inheritor of the Prophet's mantle and thus progenitor of the line of Imams was given to him publicly and clearly by the Prophet at Ghadir Khumm after Muhammad's final pilgrimage to Makkah. Also cited in support of this contention is the incident of 'the cloak' in 11/632 when the Prophet gathered his immediate family, 'Ali, Fatima his daughter and 'Ali's wife, and their sons Hasan and Husayn under his cloak, as hostages of his sincerity in an open confrontation with the Najran Christian community. In proclaiming them as his judicial associates and substitutes on this occasion, the argument runs he was also affirming them as his closest and favoured circle. For the Sunni this is simply a statement that they would be involved in any blood-debt the Prophet might incur according to Arab custom. For the Shi'a however, this action signifies a co-initiation into spiritual mysteries and the 'five' become the Holy Family of Islam, embued with supernatural powers, bearers of gnosis, and designation *nass*, which will be transmitted from one generation to the next [Massignon: 1982 vol 1. 299-303; Amir-Moezzi: 1994 & 1983].

Respondent 1.1:

7. Would you describe the status of 'Ali in your understanding as eg:

7.1 Is he regarded as *Al-Insan*?

Because of his relationship with the Prophet, you have read about the story of Hazrat 'Ali's birth in the Ka'ba........? He shared so much with him and as you know grew up with him for so much of his young life.

7.2 Is he sinless *Ma'sum* ?

Better to say that he is 'protected from sin' - we do not use the term as you do 'ontologically' different from other humans. He is kept from sin as are the imams afterwards.

7.3 Or the 'best of people' *afdal an-nass* ?

Yes, definitely........we could say so much about his knowledge, wisdom – he is a Qadi remember, and his military success............

Respondent 1.11:

7. Would you describe the status of 'Ali in your understanding as eg:

7.1 Is he regarded as *Al-Insan*?

7.2 Is he sinless *Ma'sum* ?

7.3 Or the 'best of people' *afdal an-nass* ?

He is all of these things.......the Holy Prophet and 'Ali were so very close from when 'Ali was a young boy....they will have shared so much and Hazrat will have gained and received from the Prophet knowledge and his own kinship.....

Such considerable claims for the place of 'Ali and his sons and thus their descendants provided an answer for the question of how the charismatic authority of the Prophet could be maintained after his death. Only the spiritual authority of the Imam, as given by the Prophet, could unite the *ummah* and genuinely maintain the vitality of its spiritual life and mission. This would also ensure the essential equality of all believers and prevent a relapse into the pre-Islamic revelation pattern of rule by Arab aristocracies and power blocs based on family, clan and tribal loyalties. 'Ali had established such a principle by equally distributing the plunder from the Battle of the Camel amongst his supporters. No preference was given to Arab or Persian, to old Muslim or new convert. Because of this opposition to preference and privilege, the Shi'a have always attracted the disenfranchised. For apart from respect given to their

Imams, the 'Alid cause has always affirmed the equality of believers attained by submission to the One God and his appointed spokesmen in the Imamate.

Utilising Weber's definitions and understandings of charisma draws attention to the transfer of authority and charisma from Muhammad to 'Ali in Shi'a understanding. Weber considers that when faced with the issue of succession from a charismatic leader to the next generation one answer is that of designation of the new leader by the passing one. Alternative solutions are routinisation or obviation of charisma by the community or society, which faces the future without the original visionary figure or succession by inheritance. In the first process comes:

> '...the designation on the part of the original charismatic leader of his own successor and his recognition on the part of the followers'.
>
> [Weber: 1968. 55].

For the Shi'a the main arguments for the validity of 'Ali and the Imamate's claims is that he, and therefore in turn they, were selected by the Prophet himself as his successors.

> ...for the Shi'ites, the central evidence of 'Ali's legitimacy as successor to the Prophet is the event of *Ghadir Khumm,* when the Prophet chose 'Ali to the 'general guardianship' [*walayah-i 'ammah*] of the people and made 'Ali, like himself their 'guardian'.
>
> [Tabataba'i: 1975. 40].

As has been stressed already such a designation of 'Ali by the original Prophetic figure has great significance within Shi'ism for their understandings of the succession and the person of 'Ali himself. For the Shi'a this is irrefutable evidence that both the will and wisdom of God as much as Muhammad's own conscious decision, were predetermined on a course of succession. This was to establish a pattern of leadership from within the lineage of Muhammad and the Hashemites granting them spiritual and political authority. For al-Baghdadi this is a mark of divine wisdom:

> If you ask: does divine wisdom require and necessitate that an Imam is designated and established, I would answer: Yes, divine wisdom necessitates and requires the establishment of an 'Imam'.
>
> [al-Baghdadi: 1954. 246].

Other Shi'a respondents affirmed this process of designation *nass* by the Prophet and thence into the development of the Imamate:

Respondent 1.9:

5. **At Ghadir Khumm, Shi'a traditions assert that the Prophet appointed 'Ali as his immediate successor. What is your understanding of this perception of the succession to the *Khilafat* ?**

We have no problem with this of course......it is quite clear to us that Hazrat 'Ali was properly called to the Prophet's successor. There are many Sunni traditions which affirm this as well.

Respondent 1.11:

5. **At Ghadir Khumm, Shi'a traditions assert that the Prophet appointed 'Ali as his immediate successor. What is your understanding of this perception of the succession to the *Khilafat* ?**

There is no doubt that Imam 'Ali had a very status in comparison with other Muslims in that time. He was the first male to accept Islam – we have many traditions which confirm this.....it is also at about this time that the Prophet delivered the verse which *says : 'Today I have completed your religion for you'. We cannot accept that the Prophet lied when he said this or that ''Ali was the friend of believers'. So we accept that 'Ali was appointed as the rightful successor to the Prophet.*

The example of 'Ali's designation in Shi'a perception requires a revision in understanding Weber's alternative solution to the matter of succession in his proposition of routinisation. For the transmission of authority from Muhammad to his son-in-law and thence to his grandsons cannot be considered as 'routinisation' within which relationships between the leader and the community are impersonal and not based on personal qualities [Weber:1968. 54 & 1948. 299]. The style of the succession from Muhammad to 'Ali may be described as a perpetuation of charisma with the power that established Muhammad's authority now legitimating 'Ali's, albeit in a modified form.

The form of authority which 'Ali and his own successors claimed and are claimed for them went in some degree against the traditional Arab, pre-Islamic ideas of authority and rulership. Shaban presents a perspective that 'Ali's election to the caliphate represented an innovation in contrast to the policies and elections of his three predecessors. His opponents, Talhah and al-Zubayr with 'Aisha represented the Meccan aristocracy and the alternative of 'routinisation' of authority as opposed to the disruptive pattern of ongoing charismatic authority.

> They must have been aware that 'Ali would be even more likely to make radical changes in the organisation of the empire and the position of the *Amir al-Mu'minin*....'Ali was laying claim to some religious authority in order to solve political problems. This is the origin of the view of 'Ali held by his partisans, *Shi'a,* as the *Imam* who would apply his knowledge to the achievement of justice for every Muslim. This notion of Imam-*Amir al-Mu'minin* became the basic objective of all later Shi'a sects.

[Shaban: 1971. 71 & 73].

'Ali did not hold the same prophetic status as Muhammad yet his authority may be described as charismatic as he exercised:

> ... authority of the extraordinary and personal *gift of grace* [charisma], the absolutely personal devotion and personal confidence in revelation, heroism, or other qualities of individual leadership...'Charisma' shall be understood to refer to an extraordinary quality of a person, regardless of whether this quality is actual, alleged, or presumed. 'Charismatic authority', hence, shall refer to a rule over men, whether predominantly internal, to which the governed submit because of their belief in the extraordinary quality of the specific person.
>
> [Weber: 1946. 79 & 295].

The successor receives the quality and identity of authority from the delegator. This the first three caliphs did not acquire and their relationship with 'Ali and his family was fragile. Shi'a conceptions of charisma led leadership therefore, were nurtured in crisis and continued confronting crises through to the *ghayba* of the Twelfth Imam. It is a consequence of seeking to hold together the institutionalisation of charisma and the radical freedom of a charismatic leadership.

There is however, the third element within the pattern of Shi'a claims for 'Ali's succession to the Prophet described in Weber's 'hereditary charisma'.

> ...the conception that charisma is a quality transmitted by heredity; thus that it is participated in by the kinsman of the bearer, particularly by his closest relatives. This is the case of hereditary charisma...In the case of hereditary charisma, recognition is no longer paid to the charismatic qualities of the individual, but to the legitimacy of the position he has acquired by hereditary succession...Personal charisma may be totally absent.
>
> [Weber: 1978: 248].

If the principle of succession by heredity is accepted then 'Ali as a 'kinsman' to Muhammad, who had no sons to survive him, may be taken as meeting this criterion, doubly so as a 'close relative'. Both Shi'a and Sufi apologetics stress that 'Ali had a close proximity with the Prophet from the age of six years when he grew up under Muhammad's guardianship [Tabataba'i: 1975. 190-191]. This succession by heredity transferred to the male descendants of 'Ali and Fatima, with their sons constituting the *Ahl i-Bayt.* As has been noted S 33. 33 is taken to legitimate that the Imams drew their infallible authority and impeccability from divine sources through their descent from the Prophet.

> Allah's wish is to remove uncleanness far from you, O People of the Household, and cleanse you with a thorough cleansing.
>
> [S 33. 33].

This 'cleansing' is understood as a sign of grace and favour towards the family of the Prophet by which the ongoing authority of 'Ali and the succeeding Imams is validated. In Weberian perception this constitutes 'charisma by heredity' which forms recognition of the charisma. Weber's emphasis upon the way the rights of the succeeding leader are acknowledged leads to the legitimacy of the way the individual acquires his rights and position by heredity.

The Shi'a perception of the inheritance of 'Ali from the Prophet raises a development on Weber's thesis. In Shi'ite thought, 'Ali is seen to have charisma although he is cast in a different role from Muhammad the Prophet through whom his status and charisma was channelled from the divine source. Muhammad is the final and definitive prophet, who set the boundaries of law for a new religious and political frame of reference and within which 'Ali's role and power is set and confirmed.

It has been acknowledged that the defined formation of the Shi'a movement and its distinctive ideas began an evolutionary process with the fifth Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq and was propelled forward with the occultation of the twelfth Imam. However, the initial group of supporters around 'Ali perceived him and his family as charismatic figures in a time of social crisis and tension. Watt comments:

> ...fundamental to the appearance of Shi'ism was the belief – [initially] vague at the intellectual level, but held with vehemence – that security and prosperity were to be attained by following and obeying a leader with the charisma of 'the family' whether this was interpreted as the clan of the Hashim or as the descendants of 'Ali and Fatima or in some other way.
>
> [Watt: 1968. 110].

The contemporary respondents maintained this perception of the intimacy of 'Ali with the Prophet Muhammad and his immediate family *Ahl i-Bayt:*

Respondent 1.1:

8. **Often Surah 24. 35 '...the Lamp enclosed in a glass...' is interpreted as describing the light of God within the person of the Prophet. Do you consider that respect for 'Ali derives from respect/veneration offered to the Prophet?**

Again, we have to look at the closeness of the relationship between the two people...'Ali inherited and shared from the Prophet's light...both in their pre-existence as much as in what they shared in the earthly lives together.

Respondent 1.2:

8. **Often Surah 24. 35 '...the Lamp enclosed in a glass...' is interpreted as describing the light of God within the person of the Prophet. Do you consider that respect for 'Ali derives from respect/veneration offered to the Prophet?**

'Ali was born within the confines of the Ka'ba and was so close to his cousin from the start – so he inherited this status from the Holy Prophet, his blood-relation………..remember that the family of the Prophet was close to him – Fatima, Hasan, Husayn and 'Ali………..

Light is set in a niche in the wall – to illuminate or light the room – the light in the heart of the Prophet is given to the Imam 'Ali and successors in turn.

In Shi'ite thought therefore, there is a continuity of authority both spiritual and ideally temporal as well from the Prophet to the Imams. This was focussed within the doctrine of *ismah* shared between the Prophet and his descendants through 'Ali and Fatima, which reinforces their widesweeping, personal and undefined authority. This form of charismatic authority is intensely personal and invites commitment from followers to a person rather than to an institutional authority, which the Umayyad dynasty represented. Personal charisma and authority:

> ...knows no agency of control or appeal, no local bailiwicks or exclusive functional jurisdictions; nor does it embrace permanent institutions like our bureaucratic 'departments', which are independent of persons and of purely personal charisma.
>
> [Weber: 1946. 246].

Drawing upon the high estimations of the persons of Muhammad and 'Ali in relation to God with understandings of their pre-existence and association with the divine light the Imamate are embodiments of personal charismatic authority. This authority is not derived from any human authority, institution or assembly but is included with the esoteric knowledge transmitted from the Prophet to the Imams by their descent from him. Consequently, Shi'ite understanding on the spiritual leadership of the community is different from mainstream Sunni thought and indeed from Kharijite perceptions. The former drew upon traditional Arab pre-Islamic practice with the succession of the most senior and honoured member of the community. The latter emphasised the succession of the most able and spiritually articulate of the people. The Shi'a emphasis was upon the prolongation of the authority of God through the prophetic lineage which contradicted Arab traditionalism. This is upheld by the elements of the *ummah,* who adhered to the 'Alid cause from non-Arab *mawali* client Muslims with egalitarian ideals inherited from the Prophet.

However, there are aspects of pre-Islamic Arab ideas in the Shi'ite theological construction of charismatic leadership. The focus upon the Banu Hashim within the Qurayshi relates to a form of Arab traditionalist command and succession. The Shi'a and indeed Sufi Sunni stress upon the Banu Hashim clan in distinction to other Quraysh clan groups can be said to create an oligarchic line. However, the actual transmission of authority rests less upon bloodline and kinship as upon spiritual endowment and designation. In addition, the Imam held office by virtue of a form of divine right rather than by popular acclaim [Watt: 1969: 104]. Thus the intensely charismatic Shi'ite form of authority is most resistant to dynastic succession by power or primogeniture forms of Arab traditionalist rule. The Umayyad and in turn the Abbasid establishments of power superseded the Prophetic/Qur'anic form of rule, which had in turn overturned the traditional Arab patterns. In essence the Shi'a pro-'Alid position continued the charisma of the Prophet in a personalist pattern in opposition to the routinisation of this form in the dynastic governmental system, which embraced the Sunni expressions of Islam.

As indicated the notion of the Imams' 'divine right' is present in the Shi'a understanding of spiritual authority. Watt followed by Dabashi sees:

> '...among certain sections of the Arabs, preponderantly among those from South Arabia, there was a deep yearning for a deliverer of more than human stature'
>
> [Watt: 1963. 191 & Dabashi: 1989. 106]

This places the stress upon a charismatically endowed and successive leadership. Parallel to this there is the influence of Persian Sassanid ideas, which did involve the practice of hereditary succession of one ruler to another. Such a Persian concept is qualified by the fact that the successor monarch had to be recognised by the Zoroastrian priesthood and did not therefore have the independence characteristic of the Imams.

It may be argued that the Shi'ite model does have particular Arab qualities within it as the line of the Imams is exclusively Arab in nature. Certainly, the 'household of the Prophet' may have included the manumitted Abyssinnian slave Bilal and the Persian Salman, as people close to the Prophet. In Salman's situation Lings quotes a tradition which describes Salman's energy and direction in the trench digging around Medina prior to the battle of the 'Trench' or *khandaq* [5/627].

> 'Salman is ours,' the Emigrants claimed, in virtue of his having left many homes in search of guidance. 'He is one of us,' the Helpers retorted, 'we have more right to him.' But the Prophet said: 'Salman is one of us, the people of the House.'
>
> [Lings: 1993. 217].

In contrast to this, Watt urges that Shi'ism's adherence to a charismatic personalist ideal of rulership was influenced from southern Arabian ideals, which previously had been touched by Christian monophysite ideas of a 'superhuman' actions with their interpretation of the Christ-figure.

> Thus, while the Kharijites revived an Islamic form in the tradition of the nomadic tribe, the Shi'ites...were giving an Islamic form to the old South Arabian tradition of a kingdom with a semi-divine king. This difference in background and tradition is the chief reason why some former nomads became Kharijites and some Shi'ites.
>
> [Watt: 1969. 105-106].

The 'Party of 'Ali' thus represent an upheaval of the traditional Arab pattern of succession symbolised by the *bay'ah* to Abu Bakr which held no reference to the allegiance which the *ummah* offered to the Prophet in his lifetime. The Shi'a therefore see themselves as the rightful heirs to the Prophet's ideal community and pattern of succession, which superseded the previous established and conventional model. In this idea 'Ali holds a central place as he is made to represent the ideal successor and the exemplar of esoteric knowledge, military skill, and judicial wisdom. Explicitly moreover, he carries in Shi'a estimation the Prophet's public designation *nass* as his successor:

> O Messenger! Make known that which has been revealed to you from your Lord, for if you do not do it, you will not have conveyed His message. Allah will protect you from mankind. Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.
>
> [S 5. 67].

The Shi'a belief that Surah 5. 67 was revealed on the occasion of Ghadir Khumm and that the preceding *ayah* .3 was given once 'Ali had been designated as the Prophet's successor:

> This day I have perfected your religion for you and have completed my favour to you and have chosen for you as a religion Al-Islam.
>
> [S 5. 3].

This *ayah* bears particular meaning for the Shi'a tradition with its contention that divine grace comes to the *ummah* specifically through the Prophet's household.

> This *barakah*, however, reached the Shi'ite community especially through 'Ali and the Household of the Prophet – in its particular Shi'ite sense.
>
> [Tabataba'i: 1975. 13].

From the Qur'anic authority there are three sources of authority therefore within Shi'a thought. Primarily there is the authority of God:

> ..Allah to whom belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth.
>
> [S 2. 107].

Secondly, there is the authority of the Prophet as God chooses him for his role as Messenger:

> O Mankind, I am the Messenger of Allah to you all...So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered prophet...
>
> [S 7. 158].

And thirdly, there is the authority of 'Ali on account of his personal virtues and close kinship to the prophet, with this authority being transmitted to his male descendants.

This status and the quality of 'Ali's authority is further enhanced by other features attributed to him by the Shi'a. There is the importance of the lineage of 'Ali from the Prophet; his birth within the confines of the Ka'aba; that his childhood was spent in the close care of Muhammad; his marriage to Fatima; the Qur'anic references to 'Ali as in Surah 2. 225; 'Ali's share in the *Ahl i-Bayt,* which in Shi'a understanding of the Qur'anic descriptions of the family make him infallible [S 3. 61 and 42. 23; that 'Ali is the guide of the *ummah* according to S13. 7; that 'Ali is the *Imam* of the people as based upon S36. 12; that 'Ali is the most knowledgeable of Muslims as in S 13. 43; that he is seen from S 66. 4 as the most virtuous believer; that he is the most truthful from S 9. 119; that 'Ali is from S 5. 55 the most charitable believer; and from his experiences at the battles of Badr, Uhud, Khaybar and Khandaq amongst others a brave military leader; there are also the many *hadith* which give particular identity to 'Ali in his relationship to the Prophet:

> O 'Ali, your relationship to me is similar to the one that existed between Moses and Aaron.

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Muhammad's personality in the centuries following his death in 11/632. In Weberian understanding this form of continuation will occur through routinisation or traditionalisation. In the Shi'a model however, there is this third pattern of preservation or continuity by which a person rather than an institution embodies authority and provides a focus for communal relationships. Surrounding 'Ali are traditions or *hadith* which allow him to claim from his followers a similar obedience given to the Prophet and permission to exercise a comparable authority.

'Ali exhibited this authority in both military leadership and example. Objectively, Huart in his *EI2* article comments on 'a courage which became legendary' [Huart: 1979. 30-32]. Equally, in his spiritual character Huart notes that 'all his actions were dominated by this religious spirit' [Huart: 1979. 30-32].

'Ali is also seen as a judicial authority functioning as a *qadi.* The text attributed to him *Nahj ul Balaghah* contains judgements given by 'Ali on different occasions. A further area of authority is the regard with which 'Ali' is held as a source of esoteric knowledge amongst the Sunni Sufi traditions. As has been noted this is a parallel concept to the Shi'a understanding of 'Ali as the source of the Imamate's authority.

Consequently, the transmission of charismatic authority from the Prophet to 'Ali created an alternative either to a complete routinisation of charisma into a bureaucratic pattern or into a recreation of a pre-Islamic traditional Arab model or thirdly into disintegration between conflicting groups. By contrast both the Shi'a and Sufi patterns formed alternative models of spiritual authority claiming direct descent from the Prophetic ideal. The authority found in the Shi'a tradition, and to some extent in the Sufi expressions is anti-institutional as Weber indicated. One consequence has been the turbulent history of Shi'ism and a parallel quiescent yet oppositionalist Sufism amongst the Sunni traditions. Charisma is an inner experience and expression which, once it emerges from this inner restraint confronts any move to emasculate and 'routinise' its power. Thus the attributes of 'Ali as military leader, spiritual teacher, source of knowledge, judge, and inheritor of the Prophet legitimated the Shi'a claims to being authentic Islam and combined with some doctrinal institutions such as the Imamate and subsequent developments hold the structure of Shi'ism together.

Respondent 1.3:

13. There are similar yet different themes in Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl I-Sunnat wa jama'at* [Barelvi] attitudes to public life:

> **Both can be acquiescent and quietist and then assertive. Can you describe how Imam 'Ali for example, demonstrates model Muslim attitudes and behaviour in public life?**

The Shi'a have so rarely been in positions of power in a political sense.........so we have been the minority, oppressed movement. I can imagine that Sufi people have felt the same.....but as Shi'a we have had little to do with the Sufi people, which is so varied in any case.

Under Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Imam [80/699 or 83/702 or 86/705 - 148/765] the two themes of Shi'a understanding of authority, the designation *nass* of the succeeding Imam by his predecessor from the line of the *Ahl i-Bayt* and the doctrine of *'ilm,* the esoteric understanding of the Qur'an transmitted from one Imam to the next were developed. Recognition as the leader of the community is bound up with gnosis held uniquely by this leader. Two other concepts and offices are balanced in this model of charismatic authority. Firstly, prophethood *nubuwwah* is expressed in the prophethood of Muhammad as God's messenger to humankind, and *immamah* in the line of 'Ali and his descendants providing continuing guidance for humanity. Prophethood is on a higher level than the Imamate and both are God's provision rather than humanity's choice. The authority of the Imams stems from God and thence the Prophet, who in Shi'a belief gave to 'Ali *al-'ilm al-ladunni* esoteric knowledge of the faith, and who in turn passed this onto his descendants. There is a distinction here between 'charisma of office' and 'personal charisma' as 'Ali is *Imam* not simply by his own personal qualities but by endowment from the Prophet constituting a 'personal charisma' ultimately deriving from the Transcendent. In consequence 'Ali is *wali* of God and exercises *wilayah/walayah* which is transmitted onto his successors the Imams.

Respondent 1.2:

12. Can you describe your understanding of the concepts of *Wali* and *Wilayah*?

Well, Wilayah is about rule – spiritual in most cases as much as political...so we are speaking of a person who has the capacity to exercise a spiritual power – as the Imams do in their lives, and we believe visibly the Returning Imam will do so...

Wali is more than a friend is although he is that of God...the third tenet of the shahadah defines a person as a Shi'a – Wilayah is both leadership and friendship which gives authority to the leader.

Respondent 1.14:

12. Can you describe your understanding of the concepts of Wali and Wilayah?

Wilayah is about rulership and authority – which is exercised by the Wali whom we say is 'Ali; to some extent the imams share in the wilayah of the Prophet. He is the true Wali of God Walayah is a more Shi'a concept which has to do with the power and authority that the Imams have to introduce the faithful to true spiritual *knowledge...the Shi'a say that you cannot have salvation without knowing the Imam.... The Hidden Imam that is...*

Thus the Shi'ite comprehension of authority models its understanding of God's authority upon earth as vested in the Imams as God's representatives upon earth, which Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini [1902 – 1989] was to develop in his doctrine of *wilayat i-faqih* rule of the jurisprudent. Shi'ism combines a high concept therefore of prophethood and secures its uniqueness and finality in Muhammad whilst affirming that there is also a provision of continuing guidance for humanity in the Imams. Sufism approximates to this interpretation of ongoing spiritual provision and guidance with its less formal structure of *pirs* and their guiding roles. For Twelver Shi'a, 'Ali is the successor of Muhammad not in an original sense but in a 'perpetuating continuity' sense. The Imams are in Weber's conception leaders who emerge in 'times of psychic, economic, ethical, religious, political distress' [Weber: 1946. 245]. From the Shi'ite usage of Qur'anic texts two qualities of the Imamate stand out in knowledge *'ilm* and power *qudrah* which underline the claims to authority. Earthly power has divine origins:

Allah has chosen him above you, and has increased him abundantly in wisdom and stature. Allah bestows His sovereignty on which He will. Allah is All-Embracing, All-Knowing.

[S 2. 247].

This emphasis upon knowledge deriving from divine sources is shared with Sufi traditions. Chiefly, it is knowledge of hidden significances within the Qur'an and this gnosis will according to Qur'anic affirmation be favoured by God:

> Allah will exalt those who believe among you, and those who have knowledge to high ranks.
>
> [S58. 11].

This does create a cross-reference with Sufism albeit there is little evidence of derivation between the two streams but rather parallel interpretations of the same passages out of similar experiences of social marginalisation.

> Shi'ism and the general esoteric teaching of Islam which are usually identified with the essential teachings of Sufism have a very complex and intricate relationship. Shi'ism must not be equated simply with Islamic esotericism as such. In the Sunni world Islamic esotericism manifests itself almost exclusively as Sufism, whereas in the Shi'ite world, in addition to a Sufism similar to that found in the Sunni world, there is an esoteric element based upon love [*mahabbah*] which colours the whole structure of religion.
>
> [Tabataba'i: 1975. 14].

Personal qualities are certainly important, as in 'Ali and Husayn's situations demanding overt courage, but in all the Imams as they faced their own martyrdoms. In 'Ali's context however, personal esoteric knowledge is of particular note to Shi'ism. The Imamate arose in times of crisis with the rejection of the *Ahl i-Bayt* by the de facto powers of Arab traditionalism and it continued in Shi'a thought to exist in continual crisis as a divine provision for the community. Succession is guaranteed by the various Qur'anic texts already cited with the relationship between Moses and Aaron as a main justification.

Aaron, my brother. Confirm my strength with him. And let him share my task, that we may glorify you much.

[S 20. 25-36].

And the designation in S 25. 35 of Aaron as the *wazir* to Moses. The tradition in which Muhammad says to 'Ali that 'Your relation to me is as Aaron to Moses' [Khan: 1981. 79].

'Ali's party was a heterogeneous grouping distinct from the old Mekkan families as they reasserted themselves within the Islamic revelation and community after the Prophet's death. This situation is only one amongst many causes for the evolution of the Shi'a expression but it stands against the prevailing development of authority for the majority of Sunni Muslims in the ensuing generations. 'Ali and his following rejected the institutionalising of power into the hands of a Mekkan aristocracy however related to the Prophet by kinship or marriage links. They stood for the ideals of equality exemplified in the pristine Madina community and the Qur'an. Thus the Shi'a pattern of authority is one based upon perpetuation from one generation to another by *nass* in the face of opposition and in a turbulent history. The conditions for a charismatic leadership were cyclically to be repeated with few exceptions as in the transition period to the 'Abbasids and the assumption of power by the Buyids.

Jafri [1979. 236] describes the initial and main body of adherents to the 'Alid cause as the 'legitimist' body of the Shi'a. These held to the line of 'Ali and Fatima and their direct descendants by explicit nomination. A deviation occurred in the claims to the Imamate from 'Ali's progeny by al-Hanafiya, which attracted a radical alternative to the central body, which would in time, evolve into the Twelver tradition *Ithna Ashariya.* This radical sub-movement led by Mukhtar ath-Thaqafi wished to establish a clear rejection of the Umayyad Syrian rule, which they perceived as oppression.

> ...Mukhtar was the first to mobilise for the Shi'i cause the large numbers of Iranians who, in the social structure of the Islamic Empire, held as inferior status as *Mawali* [clients of the Arab tribes]. Mukhtar in his propaganda emphasised the role of Ibn al-Hanafiyya as the Mahdi [the rightly guided one] who would deliver the Muslims from oppression and restore justice.
>
> [Momem: 1985. 35-35].

This reaction to the centralised Umayyad authority would ultimately be suppressed in 67/686 or 68/687 with the death of Mukhtar but it represents an extremist assertion of 'Alid sympathies and the ongoing desire for a charismatic leadership of the *ummah* stemming as directly as possible from the Prophet's line. The Shi'a tradition as it evolved into various expressions and especially into its 'legitimist' and main stream in the Twelvers perpetuated the charismatic model exemplified in the Prophet's life and ministry. A continuity was established by the Imamate's succession from one generation to the next with *nass* as the key principle of designation and the adherence of the community. The paradoxical permanence of this perpetually moving continuity was finally established with the lesser and then greater occultations of the twelfth Imam in 260/874 and 329/941 respectively. In such a way the charismatic experience of the first generation of Islam is permanently available for the faithful.

6.3 The Charisma of 'Ali: the Sunni Sufi perspective.

The Middle Eastern world into which Muhammad and his message came was an openly and public religious environment. If Islam was the first indigenously religious experience for the Arabian peninsular it was not the first religious experience per se. Local polytheism, the *jahiliyya* of later Muslim opprobrium was embedded in the social context and structure of Arab life. Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian communities were also to be found in the peninsular albeit they had not entered deeply into local society. The key element however of pre-Islamic Arabia was the tribal union, which gave to society its particular character. The innovation of Muhammad's ministry was to offer a replacement of the kinship by blood loyalty with the kinship by faith relationship. This pattern was, as has already been noted *supra* an ongoing feature of Shi'a and Kharijite expressions of Islam in distinction to the reassertion of traditional Arab patterns of leadership under the first three 'rightly guided caliphs'.

Hence the emergence of Muhammad's message was an innovation both politically and spiritually in Arabia. However, with Muhammad's death and then the process of formalising his charismatic authority, pre-Islamic patterns of government and authority reasserted themselves. These would have for Sunni contexts significant power to mould the patterns of authority, which had once been cumulatively held in the Prophet's person. It has to be stressed that the Prophet's authority was all-inclusive embracing political, judicial, military and spiritual dimensions. Surah 7. 158 provides the vision of this all-inclusive social structure:

> So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the Prophet who can neither read nor write, who believes in Allah and in His words and follow him that you may be led aright.

[S 7. 158].

The survival of the new community *ummah* as a brotherhood rather than as a *qudrah* tribal entity depended upon the formation of the next pattern of authority. In essence how was the charisma of the Prophet to be institutionalised within and for the well being of the faithful?

> If this is not to remain a purely transitory phenomenon, but to take on the character of a permanent t relationship, a 'community' of disciples or followers or a party organisation or any sort of political or hierocratic organisation, it is necessary for the character of charismatic authority to become radically changed. Indeed, in its pure form, charismatic authority may be said to exist only *in statu nascendi.* It cannot remain stable but becomes either traditionalised or rationalised, or a combination of both.
>
> [Weber: 1978. 246].

In Muhammad's situation his charismatic authority had embraced several complex areas of responsibility in the political, spiritual, juridical, and military. He had been the ultimate source of authority as head of the political community and the voice of spiritual supremacy. Initially, with but a handful of followers in Khadijah, 'Ali, Abu Bakr and a few others the authority of Muhammad could openly have been expressed in spiritual terms. With the key transition however, in the *hijrah* of 622 to Medina the Prophet's authority became polyform. The Qur'anic revelations continued, the *muhajiroun* and the *ansar* had expanded into a large community, the successful military attacks upon Meccan trade caravans, and arbitration by the Prophet of disputes between the Medinan groups enhanced Muhammad's status as a leader. Such a unified model of authority could not be continued after the Prophet's death although within the Shi'a tradition in the figure of the Imam such an attempt has been made.

In both Sunni and Shi'a understanding the authority of the Prophet stemmed directly from God, which enabled his authority to permeate such a wide range of contexts with such a profound endorsement in Surah 7 158.

As the 'messenger' of God, Muhammad therefore holds a singular position between God and humankind [S 2. 151] with a steady Qur'anic exhortation to obey both God and the Messenger [S 3. 31-32 & 132]. Thus the exemplar of the Prophet's obedience to God is a quality to be emulated by others and the act of imitation of the Prophet becomes a mark of faithfulness for the believer.

Within Islam the period after the Prophet's death in 11/632 until 41/661 and the foundation of the Umayyad dynasty proved to be turbulent with three of the four 'Rightly Guided Caliphs' meeting violent deaths. The removal by his own death of the key charismatic figure of Muhammad inevitably opened the way for a tortuous and transitional period in the life on the Muslim *ummah.* A major factor in this turbulence was that the charismatic and revolutionary innovations under the Prophet did not wholly supplant traditional Arab modes of leadership, succession and rule. They were to reappear once more after his death and largely to shape the future dynastic generations and empires of the Islamic world. The exceptions were to be, as has been noted the Imami/Twelver Shi'a traditions and as a series of counter-movements the Sufi expressions within Sunni Islam. These have attempted through Islamic history to perpetuate the model of the Prophet's charismatic leadership.

This charismatic model sought to change traditional Arab model of leadership with a fresh set of moral demands upon its adherents and to create a hierarchical structure of power: the transcendent God, the Messenger, and thence the Community of the faithful. In Weberian terms, Muhammad was an 'ethical prophet' who always innovate a new moral system of demands upon their followers with requisite rewards for them. In the succession to the Prophet after his death the majority of the community reverted to the traditional Arab pattern with rivalries between the Meccan-*Muhajiroun* and the Medinan-*Ansar* groups in seeking a successor. Watt demonstrates that the Arab custom of the tribal council deciding upon the future leadership came into force and finally gave the appointment to Abu Bakr. This pattern was not an isolated move as 'Umar prior to his death in 23/644 nominated a council for his successor's appointment. 'Uthman was duly appointed and allegiance was duly given to him [Watt: 1968. 31]. Thus pre-Islamic practices of tribal loyalties and customs were insinuating themselves into the new structures from 11/632 until the Umayyad assumption of authority in 41/661. Weber stressed that it was economic forces that would 'routinise' the original enthusiasm of the first charismatically inspired followers into a bureaucratic system of ruler and ruled [Weber: 1946 . 54]. This was the development that occurred for the majority of the generations subsequent to the Prophet's lifetime with the pristine fervour of the Prophet's message being transmitted forward by an element of the Quraysh, non-Arab adherents, and a spiritual rather than an economic elite.

Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* respondents whilst honouring 'Ali in his due time as caliph stressed the appropriateness of the succession of the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs'.

Their comments invariably described the Shi'a advocacy of 'Ali as the usurped caliph as an extreme position:

Respondent 2.1:

6. At Ghadir Khumm, Shi'a traditions assert that the Prophet appointed 'Ali as his immediate successor. What is your understanding of this perception of the succession to the *Khilafat*?

This Shi'a idea contrasts with the understanding that the most senior member of the community would succeed the Prophet. It would not have been expected that one as young as 'Ali would be elected when there were older men present like Abu Bakr. So 'Ali was elected in due time when he was senior enough.

Respondent 2.6:

6.At Ghadir Khumm, Shi'a traditions assert that the Prophet appointed 'Ali as his immediate successor. What is your understanding of this perception of the succession to the *Khilafat*?

I am not familiar with this story..........we would say that Hazrat 'Ali succeeded in due time after the elders of the community had served as caliph of the community. If 'Ali had succeeded straight after the Holy Prophet he would have been elected before older men such as Abu Bakr, who had served as Prayer Leader for the Prophet and so had a prominence..........

Again, the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* respondents perceived excess on the Shi'a understandings of 'Ali as *bab* to the Prophet as the 'City of Knowledge'. 'Ali is seen to hold a key place in Sufi *silsilah* of gnosis in various *tariqa* but there was caution on the origins and development of extreme devotion to the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law:

Respondent 2.3:

4. **There is a high estimate of Imam 'Ali within contrasting traditions of Islam....eg: ''Ali is the Gate to the City of Knowledge'.**

Is this your perception of Hazrat 'Ali....? Do you hold to a similar devotion? to the Holy Family around the Prophet?

We would honour the family of the Prophet because and as far as he would have us do so.....this can be extended beyond boundaries permitted by him......certainly they are to be respected greatly......they were close to him.

Respondent 2.4:

4. **There is a high estimate of Imam 'Ali within contrasting traditions of Islam....eg: ''Ali is the Gate to the City of Knowledge'.**

Is this your perception of Hazrat 'Ali....? Do you hold to a similar devotion? to the Holy Family around the Prophet?

Whilst we do not go to the extreme s of the Shi'a in regard to 'Ali, we would see him as one of the caliphs of God and certainly as a saint – a wali of God. So for Sufi people there is honour for 'Ali as the 'gate' to the spiritual knowledge given by the Prophet to believers.... through their pirs...... 'Ali is a pir in a sense that he was so close to the Holy Prophet who is the bearer of knowledge and the carrier of the Qur'an.

After 11/632 a threefold pattern of developments to the Prophet's order emerged in the Sunni traditions: the return firstly, to a more normal traditional Arab social life; secondly, the continued existence and influence of pre-Islamic authority and succession; with thirdly, the break-up of Muhammad's charismatic authority into several sub-spheres. The first development was modified by the constant state of military expansion under the second and third caliphs 'Umar [13/634 - 23/644] and 'Uthman [23/644 – 35/656] and the manner in which the Qur'an enforced the Prophet's moral demands and spiritual legacy. However, these three sub-developments with the geographical enlargement of the Islamic suzerainty created an organic differentiation of roles within the *ummah.* The authority of the caliphs was attributable to their occupation of the position of *khalifah rasul Allah* 'vicegerent to the messenger of God'. This rested upon a process of invariable nomination by the preceding caliph and thence election in a pre-Islamic Arab pattern. A claim to legitimacy could be made by all the succeeding caliphs from Abu Bakr to the Abbasids that by virtue of their membership of the Quraysh, the Prophet's own tribe. From the time of 'Umar a separate office from the political role of the caliph evolved with the *qadi* as the judicial function of Islam [Hitti: 1970. 225]. Thus a further differentiation of the prophetic inheritance and model occurred. Other offices were to separate from the caliphal position under the Abassids in the *wazir* or chief minister and *amir* general thus extending the original charismatic authority further from its original state. Of particular note however, was the formation of the religious scholarly class *'ulama,* with its crucial area of knowledge and applied expertise in the religious sciences of the Qur'an and Hadith. Parallel however, to these divisions of function was the evolution of the Sufi traditions with their appropriation of spiritual charismatic authority.

Respondent 2.2

11. **Can you describe the significance of Sufi Orders/influences for yourself and your understanding of Imam 'Ali?**

Here we do represent a pattern of Sufi spiritual influence in Britain. So we would not pick out 'Ali as one above another but respect him as a source of knowledge and guidance for many Muslims.........and tariqas.........

Respondent 2.5:

11. **Can you describe the significance of Sufi Orders/influences for yourself and your understanding of Imam 'Ali?**

Yes, we are Sufi people...but I do not think Sufi people over stress the place of Hazrat 'Ali.... He is one of the Holy Prophet's companions and very close to him...he is as I have said the head of chains of knowledge for many orders....so he is important in that way.......

In Sunnism therefore, the authority initially wholly vested in the person of the Prophet gradually sub-divided into separate if interdependent areas. *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* respondents reflected this process by describing their perceptions of 'Ali as one related to the transmission of spiritual knowledge in Sufi *tariqa* and as one of the four 'Rightly Guided Caliphs'. Political leadership was assumed by the caliph and eventually by the *wazir*; the judicial sphere was assumed by the *qadi* class; military power and leadership came to the *amirs*; religious teaching fell to the *'ulama*; and significantly, spiritual authority in both official and populist dimensions was assumed by the *Sufi* orders and *pirs.* Concepts such as the *Imamate* were seen as innovative *bida* in character from Shi'a sources.

Respondent 2.1:

8.I understand that an Imam is both a guide *Hadi* and a Proof *Hujja.* Can you please explain these two concepts?

I do not have much knowledge on these ideas....the Imam is a Shi'a idea and I think is taken to extreme by their thought.

And:

10.Is the historical development of devotion to the Imam and the Holy Family within Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl I-Sunnat wa jama'at* [Barelvi] circles a matter of separate development, or is one derivative of the other?

Ah me! I sense there is independent developments here....I am not a specialist in this area.

Respondent 2.3:

8.I understand that an Imam is both a guide *Hadi* and a Proof *Hujja.* Can you please explain these two concepts?

These are Shi'a ideas.........as you will know they take the place of the Imam much further than Sunni people do.....we would not see there being grounds for such an idea of leadership in an 'Imam' idea.

And:

10.Is the historical development of devotion to the Imam and the Holy Family within Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl I-Sunnat wa jama'at* [Barelvi] circles a matter of separate development, or is one derivative of the other?

As far as I can tell they are independent of one another......we would not for example share many ideas with the Shi'a on the Imamate...it is a distinct set of beliefs from other Muslims.

Respondent 2.12:

8.I understand that an Imam is both a guide *Hadi* and a Proof *Hujja.* Can you please explain these two concepts?

Of course the Imams are not seen in this way amongst the Barelvi people........

And:

10.Is the historical development of devotion to the Imam and the Holy Family within Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl I-Sunnat wa jama'at* [Barelvi] circles a matter of separate development, or is one derivative of the other?

I am not a specialist in this area but I would see it as different.........

6.4 Perspectives upon 'Ali ibn Abu Talib.

The period from the death of the Prophet in 11/632 until 41/661 provides a crucial nexus of time within Muslim understanding of Islam's subsequent developments in doctrine, spirituality, political theories, and interpretations of the Qur'an. The very nature of both the leadership of the *ummah* and its character were subject to dispute and contention. The parties involved, which were in the subsequent centuries to evolve into defined traditions with their own structures and worldviews, represented varying reactions to the Prophet's ministry and attempts to perpetuate its power and significance. Inherent to these reactions were the personalities of the four caliphal successors to the Prophet and in particular the figure of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib.

As has been noted the routinisation of Sunni Islam involved the differentiation of the Prophet's functions into segmented professions. The Sufi traditions maintained the inspirational and charismatic dimension of Muhammad's legacy continually seeking to authenticate their claims by proving proximity to the Prophet and his family even though they would reject the 'Alid claims for the leadership of the *ummah* as unrealistic.

The Shi'a tradition in its Twelver form insisted on the perpetuation of the charisma of the Prophet through the succeeding Imams as the rightfully designated leaders of Islam. Consequently, in Shi'ism one encounters an institutionalised 'anti-institutional' movement, which has sought to keep focused in one charismatic figure both religious and political roles inherited from the Prophet's example. As a parallel set of movements, Sufism also developed an anti-institutional character to the prevailing nature of dynastic Sunnism as it adopted a re-emergent pre-Islamic Arab traditionalism.

Through disputes in the historical development of Islam these two streams have formed and consolidated their respective understandings of the Prophet's role and the significance of his immediate family in their claims for spiritual legitimacy. In both instances the possibility of some political authority, by claiming the status of Muslim authenticity in contrast to the *de facto* authorities proved elusive. In confronting common oppositional powers the discourse of Shi'a and Sunni Sufi expressions has taken some common paths and used approximate symbols drawn from the *Ahl i-bayt* and in particular the person of the Prophet's son-in-law.

For example respondents from both Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* traditions identified 'Ali and Husayn his younger son as martyrs in the face of overwhelming opposition:

Respondent 1.5:

5. **Popular apologetic portrays the deaths of Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn as martyrdom and the result of jealousies eg for Husayn emerging from political usurpation by Muawiya and Yazid.**

We have always see devotion to 'Ali as bringing great blessing – certainly when we declare him as martyr. Now he is a martyr – the only one of the acknowledged caliphs to be so....Husayn in a sense is a martyr more obviously against the Umayyads and their policies.......but 'Ali is as well facing as he did their opposition to his election.

And:

Respondent 2.1:

5. **Popular apologetic portrays the deaths of Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn as martyrdom and the result of jealousies eg for Husayn emerging from political usurpation by Muawiya and Yazid.**

Do you share this understanding of their deaths? Does this explain to you the frequent sense of persecution by the Twelver Shi'a tradition?

Well, yes....here we commemorate the death of Husayn inside the mosque...no we do not have a procession....he certainly died resisting worldly power in Yazid and Mu'awiya.

These symbols, which originate in the turbulent first twenty-nine years of the Muslim era transferred to the South Asian context by migration and mission and thence in the latter part of the twentieth century to the British situation. Sufism, as the attempt to maintain the charismatic identity of the *ummah* and history, is the way for the faithful to walk towards the final judgement and resurrection. Integral to this modality of faith are the Sufi *tariqa* and *pirs* with their exemplary status and mediating roles of grace to the faithful traced to the Prophet. The Shi'a identity and path is the perpetuation of both the experiences of the earliest community around the Prophet and thus the leadership of this community in his descendants. It is through his designated line that the clearest extension of his charismatic presence into history may be made. The ultimate expression into the flow of history of such a presence is in the figure of the Hidden Imam as descendant through 'Ali and his sons from the Prophet himself.

The resemblances of devotion to 'Ali ibn Abu Talib between Twelver Shi'a and Sufi Sunni expressions such as the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* express means of reference to the original Muslim charismatic encounter and the social reactions to that person and his immediate family.

In responding to the research questions and aims therefore:

6.4.1 To investigate the contemporary relationship between Shi'ite and Barelvi perceptions of the veneration of Imam 'Ali. How do leaders of contrasting Muslim emphases in Britain today describe their perspectives upon the status and devotion shown to Imam 'Ali?

In both Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* organisation of ideas there exists a parallel usage of sacred symbols and ideas that lend authority to their respective claims to continuity with both the Qur'anic revelation and the Prophetic inheritance. In particular, drawing from the Qur'an there are references to marks of a spiritual leader in *ilm* knowledge, *mas'um* infallibility, and *ismah* impeccability. These aspects whether for the *Imam* or the *qutb* are indicators of rightful spiritual authority. For the Shi'a expression 'Ali is the co-inheritor and source of such qualities from the Prophet and equally for the majority of Sufi traditions he plays a parallel role in offering spiritual knowledge *gnosis*. Certainly, in a qualified manner 'Ali will be regarded similarly within *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* circles. Sunni sentiment and opinion amongst the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* leadership however, will regard the historical succession of the three caliphs prior to 'Ali as legitimate and find the Shi'a claims that 'Ali was usurped as the immediate and rightful successor to the Prophet as inappropriate. Thus a Shi'a respondent would affirm:

Respondent 1.7:

Yes……I weep when we hear the accounts of 'Ali and the deaths of his two sons..He is to be seen as the source of knowledge....spiritual and human....do you know he is a grammarian, an astronomer, a scholar of the Qur'an…….and a wise judge?

In contrast with a Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* respondent's comment:

Respondent 2.2:

We see Hazrat 'Ali as one of the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs' – to see him otherwise is to go to exaggeration or innovation……..there was a clear pattern of succession amongst the community around the Holy Prophet so there was an order about it….for 'Ali to have come or been elected first would have broken existing tradition.

Historically there has been tension and conflict between the two traditions in the sub-continent homeland of the majority of their respective adherents. Religious symbols have been utilised to express political and economic differences and disputes. By contrast in the British context whilst there can be overt areas of disagreement there are common factors for unity – the charisma of 'Ali, his place as a key figure in Sufi ideology and transmission of ideas, and his adherence to the ideals of the pristine community of the Prophet himself and his *wilayah.* There is in addition the unifying factor that both traditions belong to a religious minority and face incomprehension if not hostility by society. Consequently, the maintenance of religious ideals and practice becomes a matter of common concern.

6.4.2 To test the hypothesis that contemporary expressions among Shi'ite and Barelvi Muslims resident in the UK concerning 'Ali disregard the extent to which one set of perceptions is derived from the other.

Secondly, whilst it cannot be construed that there is direct derivation and interpolation of ideas between these traditions throughout history it may be affirmed that as both expressions have had the nature of being cast as oppositional movements then they have drawn upon common sources and symbols to substantiate their claims to represent authentic Islam. In essence the hermeneutic has been convergent over the same sources of authority and legitimation. In this purpose they have used the figure of 'Ali as a means of access to the Prophet casting him in contrasting identities as exemplified in figure: 9 as a typology of devotion.

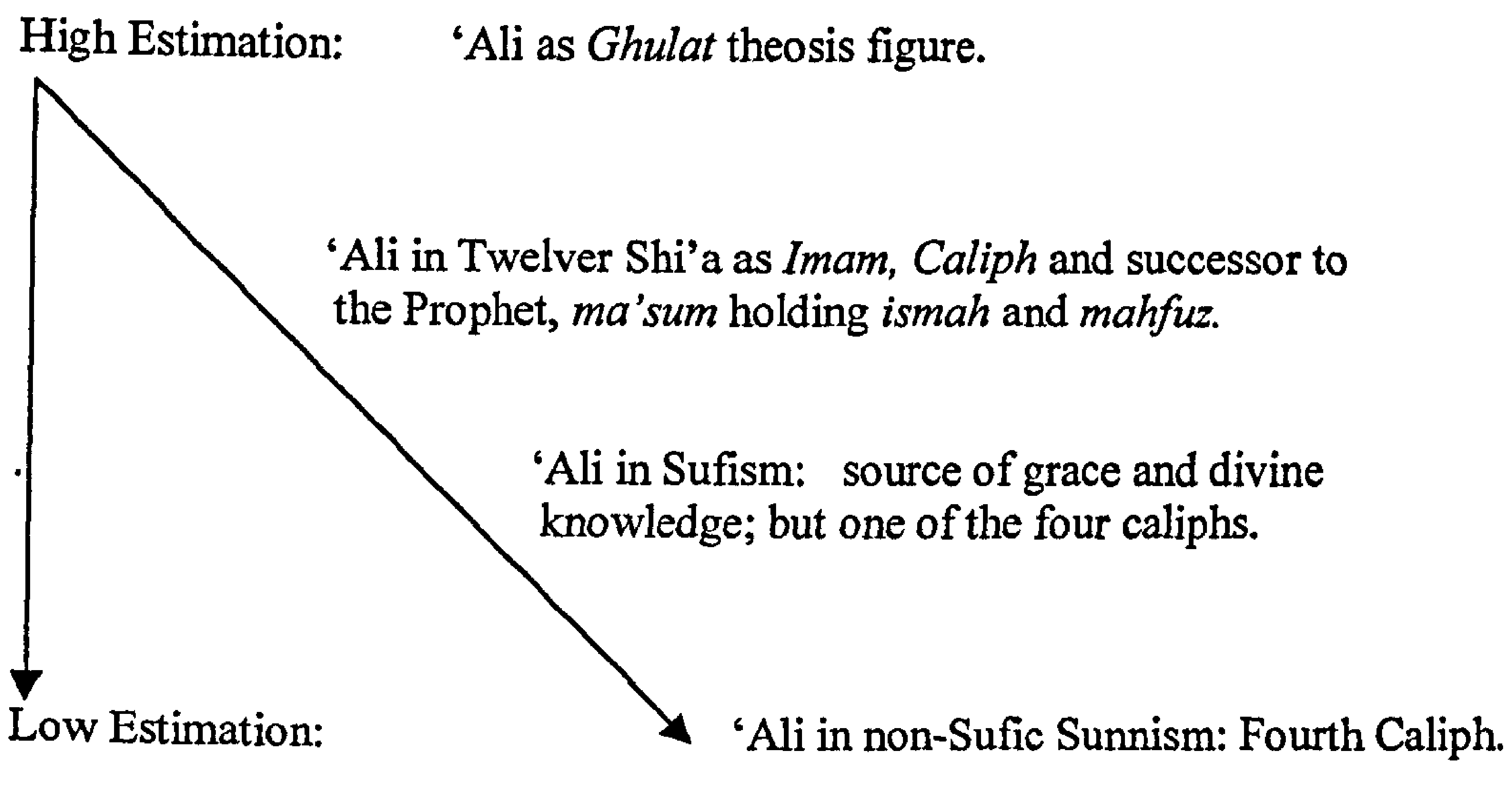
High Estimation:
'Ali as *Ghulat* theosis figure.
'Ali in Twelver Shi'a as *Imam, Caliph* and successor to the Prophet, *ma'sum* holding *ismah* and *mahfuz.*
'Ali in Sufism: source of grace and divine knowledge; but one of the four caliphs.
Low Estimation:
'Ali in non-Sufic Sunnism: Fourth Caliph.

Figure 9.

The figure of 'Ali bears a commonality of function between Twelver Shi'a and Sufi influenced Sunni streams as he is acknowledged as a key source of esoteric knowledge. Thus, there is a parallel present in both text and field work evidence that for the Shi'a the Imamate serves a similar function as that served by the *pirs* for the Sufi streams amongst Sunnism. Indeed as has been noted *supra* despite Ahmad Raza Khan's antipathy towards Shi'ism in his own lifetime there is a commonality of understandings that the Imamate and the *pirs* are exemplars of the Prophet Muhammad and provide an intimacy and closeness to him that the more formal and routinised models of Islam cannot provide. Like Shi'ism, the Sufi expressions such as the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* have traditionally been popular oppositionalist movements not associated with official Muslim structures. Both the tombs of the *pirs* as much as those of the *Imams*, enshrine both their memories and their effective spiritual power but also become centres of pilgrimage for the faithful. The concept of spiritual descent from the Prophet, invariably through 'Ali, with a devotional esoteric rather than communal mode of knowledge are further parallels between Twelver Shi'a and Sufi traditions such as the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* movement. Paradoxically, less than there being direct derivation of ideas concerning 'Ali from the respective traditions there has been a usage of these common symbolics such as devotion to the *Ahl i-Bayt* the Family of the Prophet irrespective of their importance to the other.

Respondent 1.12:

14.Can you give reasons for devotion to the House of the Prophet *Ahl I-Bayt* in your stream of Islam?

Sufi influence?

Political emphasis?

No, no….this is the faith of the people….the true Muslims………

Contrasted with Sunni *Ahl I-Sunnat wa jama'at* comment:

Respondent 2.8:

14.Can you give reasons for devotion to the House of the Prophet *Ahl I-Bayt* in your stream of Islam?

Sufi influence?

Political emphasis?

If I understand it correctly, then it would be because of the Prophet's teaching and instruction for Muslims to honour his family.

Such symbols and ideas have been deployed to substantiate claims to legitimacy often, as in the case of nineteenth and twentieth century India under British rule where there has been rivalry between the traditions. It is only where the two expressions have found a common and shared hostility to an external threat as in issues of perceived blasphemy against the Prophet exemplified in 1988 with the publication of Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* [Rushdie: 1988] that an awareness of mutual co-operation has been overtly maintained. This has reversed the pattern of overt antagonism between *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* adherents and other Sunni traditions such as the *Deoband* and *Ahl i-Hadith* as well as with the Shi'a traditions, which were characteristic of intra-faith relations for Muslims in nineteenth and twentieth century India and post 1947 in Pakistan [Hasan: 1997. 8, 80 and 208]. Confronting a common hostility whether in Islamophobia, secularism, or Rushdie's 'Satanic Verses' has served to unite otherwise discordant movements in common purpose.

6.4.3 To analyse the implications of this hypothesis for a re-evaluation of and a fresh approach to Shi'ite and Barelvi perspectives on the issue.

It is in connection thirdly, with such perceptions that Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* understandings both cohere and yet diverge on the figure of 'Ali ibn Abu Talib just as Muslim expressions and movements will diverge on their understandings and estimates of the Prophet himself or as Christian traditions will differ on Christologies. They have adopted and used albeit negationally at times one another's discourse on 'Ali with the result that understandings on the *Imam/qutb*, the saint/friend of God *wali,* the authority of the *wali* in the *wilayah/walayah* concept, the martyr *shadid,* and prophethood *nubuwwah* have been juxtaposed in a common Muslim consciousness. The verification of these understandings has been based on interpretations of Qur'anic passages and prophetic *Hadith* invariably without reference to the alternative tradition's understanding and more often in conflict with one another.

6.4.4 To place the findings of the literary and fieldwork research within the wider Muslim traditions and to contribute to an understanding of a historical and contemporary area of tension and polarisation.

Fourthly, within the experience of the wider Muslim traditions the Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* readings of history and contemporary attitudes and understandings have parallels but use common Muslim figures and symbols in contrasting ways. For both the Twelver Shi'a and the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* there is such significance in the historical events of the Prophet's life when revelation to humankind is renewed and reaffirmed. The Prophet however, in Shi'a understanding has with his cousin 'Ali an intimacy of spiritual as much as kinship relationship that their roles overlap both in their earthly lives and in their metaphysical identities. This is an emphasis not replicated in the Sunni tradition as 'Ali is maintained in due order within the caliphal succession. This demands intra-faith skills and awareness to be able to read the same texts or sources whilst accepting a diversity of significance within them. Muslims like their counterparts in other religious traditions have multiple roles and understandings. At no one time may one boundary or understanding be the sole arbiter of his or her identity, although at any one time and for any one issue one boundary may become more important and define that division or question. The depth and quality of this inter-action between *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* and Shi'a adherents has been disputatious and continues to be so in many respects. The common symbols that surround 'Ali as they unfold from the past – *wali* friend of God, *Imam* leader, *shahid* martyr, and *Bab* source of knowledge provide elements of unity, cohesion and integration with historical legitimation for an intra-faith religious pluralism.

Shi'ism followed the rapid expansion of Islam into Iran, North Africa, Anatolia and Central Asia and later and more slowly into Northern India. 'Followed' because the Shi'a expression at the boundaries between Islamic and non-Islamic areas geographically is rarely represented as a distinct military or political force. Consequently, the narrative of Muslim expansion into these areas is that of Sunni expansion. The issue of *jihad* as the extension of the *Dar ul Islam* is therefore not a Shi'a issue. . A major exception to such a statement is in the Iran – Iraq conflict of 1980 - 1988, which became a *jihad* of military action to defend the Shi'a perception of the true Islam. In general the struggle *jihad* of Shi'ism is an internal matter within the political and theological domains of Islam and not upon its borders. It is a *jihad* of witness to their perception of Islamic history gone awry over the succession to the Prophet. There is also in Shi'a belief the necessity of the imamate as guides and proofs of the faith.

Where Sufi and Shi'a forms of Islam were involved in the extension and expansion religiously and politically of the faith was within the processes of social, cultural and religious integration that followed the conquests, which brought peoples of diverse beliefs and customs under the umbrella of Islam. Rahman comments on this role of Shi'ism:

> Immediately after Muslim conquests of the Fertile Crescent and Persia, the new converts from the conquered territories began to swarm into the new Faith. By and large, however, the new converts left intact their older oriental and Gnostic beliefs and even practices under an overlay of Islamic formulas. Under the surface, therefore, there continued to exist a variety of religious beliefs whose confrontation with the new religion produced a tremendous spiritual ferment and a fluidity of religious ideas...This led to the formation of secret sects, and just as Shi'ism served the purposes of the politically ousted, so under its cloak the spiritually displaced began to introduce their old ideas into Islam

[Rahman: 1968. 210].

This is a somewhat critical assessment of Shi'ism. Yet when Shi'a movements surfaced in political and military forms therefore, they usually emerged in opposition to pre-established forms and regimes within Islam. When these regimes weakened and conditions for explicit witness were available, the veil of *taqiyya* was removed in proportion. With this Shi'a teaching in evidence the internal divisions of opinion within Islam were more visible than its boundaries. With the patronage of the Safavid dynasty in Persia [907/1501 – 1145/1732] however, Twelver Shi'ism became a fully independent, institutionalised and state religion – a new orthodoxy in every sense to rival the Sunni tradition. In this period the majority of Shi'a compendia of doctrine and law was formulated [Donaldson 1933. 304].

The rituals and affirmations of Shi'ism are those of an ongoing argument within the history of Islam, for which the conflict between 'Ali and the three previous caliphs, and then between Husayn and Yazid are a set of paradigms.

The essential contrast for the Twelver Shi'a and Sufi Sunnis exemplified in this study with the *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* are between two kinds of religious authority in Islam, which place bonds of affection/emotion and kinship in opposite relation to formal and legal ties of authority. This ritual interpretation of boundaries in Islam and between Islamic tradition has comparative value and purpose in itself.

In discussing Islam in Morocco for example, Geertz [1968. 76-78] distinguished between two kinds of 'theories of legitimacy' : the 'Intrinsic' and the 'Contractual', which he noted as being combined in the Moroccan Sultanate. Geertz felt that these two kinds of legitimacy corresponded to the Shi'a Imamate [intrinsic] i.e. based upon descent from the Prophet and his inherent spiritual qualities, and the other Sunni form [contractual] corresponded to routinised Islam where leadership is elected or affirmed formally by the Muslim community.

The Shi'a therefore in holding to the lineage of the Prophet are indicating and claiming a proximity to a pattern of religious truth and knowledge that was lost in the face of history and the rise of a dynastic, bureaucratic Islam found in Sunnism. 'The world as lived and the world as imagined' may be fused says Geertz in ritual 'under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms' [Geertz: 1968. 213] but this fusion is effected across the distance of history, geography and culture.

In Islam, all tradition and law is based upon a supposition that precise knowledge of the past can be achieved. There is also a perception that a certain kind of history based upon verification and retention of certain qualities of this past serves but many of the functions of legend and myth in other traditions. The difference between history and myth in this case, is not that one is factual and the other is fictitious but rather a difference between views on the nature of time and humanity. Men and women at the time of Muhammad can be seen as essentially identical to men and women today. At that time they received the light and word of God to seal its meaning for all time. To replicate that time is to retain its meaning whether in form or emotions.

The age of 'Ali and Husayn therefore is the present age as well. The nature of humanity at the time of 'Ali's death and indeed at Karbala is the present as well in the present. The opposition and loss that mark the present age begin with the death of Muhammad and the struggle for a righteous succession to him.

This study has partly focussed upon the understandings of 'Ali amongst leaders of Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* in the UK today. Roots of dissension and dispute, commonalties and mutually honoured concepts, have been traced to contexts in India whence the majority of the Muslim population in Britain has migrated. It has been important to pinpoint the advent of British rule in mid-nineteenth century in India and for example in the context of Lucknow, one of the few states where the Shi'a had a political dominance.

The establishment of Shi'a institutions and power in the Awadh/Oudh/Uttar Pradesh area for example, created a dual orthodoxy for Islam. In one sense the creation of such parallel systems of law and custom and two models of religious authority was and is unthinkable in Islam. However, with the British annexation of the Awadh/Oudh this situation of division became balanced. Although difficult to comprehend and taking time to address the division between Shi'a and Sunni with both parties losing political power to the British it allowed the division to continue and thereby the religious freedom of the respective traditions to be preserved as well. This gave the identities of the two streams a *legality* and *validity,* which within Islam they do not normally possess. It also offers a pattern of interrelationship for the two streams of Twelver Shi'ism and the Sufi nourished *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at.*

Through affirming the primacy of 'Ali at commemorations of his death, of the declaration at Ghadir Khumm, and then momentously at the Ashura processions in

Muharram, the Shi'a are exposing their understanding of being the 'true Islam' Their self-perception is as victims of history, and as opponents of the Caliph Yazid in an opposition that is prior in a temporal and epistemological sense to the formation of division within Islam. In doing this, they publicly make their allegiance to the Imamate – 'Ali and Husayn – clear and across boundaries defined by law and custom in a symbolic approximation of the journey made by 'Ali to Kufa and Husayn to Karbala. When the symbolic opposition of Karbala is pushed beyond the boundaries of subjective apprehension and expression into actual polarisation between the followers of 'Ali and Husayn and those of the caliphs of Islam, then the assassination of 'Ali at Kufa and the events at Karbala are repeated and rehearsed once more. In using common symbolics of authority, figures, and institutions the Sunni *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* offers a parallel trajectory and interpretation of Islamic history. The aim was to present to the *ummah* and to the wider world a claim to authentic Islam, which carried the charismatic stamp of the Prophet and the Qur'anic revelation. The paradox is that both traditions utilised a common range of ideas often in opposition to one another but more genuinely so in opposition to perceived or imagined hostile or failing Islam, which reinforced their respective identities of holding to the veracities of the faith.

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Appendix.

Interview Schedule.

Imam 'Ali in Twelver Shi'ite and *Ahl i-Sunnat wa jama'at* [Barelvi] traditions of Islam: An Investigation into perceptions of Sainthood, Martyrdom and Prophethood within Shi'ite and Barelvi Islam, and the way in which these concepts are used and understood by Religious Leaders of these traditions resident in the UK.

Respondent:

Address:

Tel/fax:

E-mail:

Date of Interview:

Referral by:

Acknowledged tradition:

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1. **Would you please indicate your time of residence in the UK and country of origin?**

2. **The Muslim Community which you serve – would you describe their origins, cultural background, social/educational status in the UK?**

3. **Do you identify with a particular tradition/*mashlaq* within Islam?**

4. **There is a high estimate of Imam 'Ali within contrasting traditions of Islam....eg: "Ali is the Gate to the City of Knowledge'.**

   Is this your perception of Hazrat 'Ali....? Do you hold to a similar devotion? to the Holy Family around the Prophet?

5. Popular apologetic portrays the deaths of Imam 'Ali and Imam Husayn as martyrdom and the result of jealousies eg for Husayn emerging from political usurpation by Muawiya and Yazid.

   Do you share this understanding of their deaths? Does this explain to you the frequent sense of persecution by the Twelver Shi'a tradition?

6. At Ghadir Khumm, Shi'a traditions assert that the Prophet appointed 'Ali as his immediate successor. What is your understanding of this perception of the succession to the *Khilafat* ?

7. Would you describe the status of 'Ali in your understanding as eg:

7.1 Is he regarded as *Al-Insan*?

7.2 Is he sinless *Ma'sum* ?

7.3 Or the 'best of people' *afdal an-nass* ?

8. I understand that an Imam is both a guide *Hadi* and a Proof *Hujja.* Can you please explain these two concepts?

9. Often Surah 24. 35 '...the Lamp enclosed in a glass...' is interpreted as describing the light of God within the person of the Prophet. Do you consider that respect for 'Ali derives from respect/veneration offered to the Prophet?

10. Is the historical development of devotion to the Imam and the Holy Family within Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl I-Sunnat wa jama'at* [Barelvi] circles a matter of separate development, or is one derivative of the other?

11. Can you describe the significance of Sufi Orders/influences for yourself and your understanding of Imam 'Ali?

12. Can you describe your understanding of the concepts of *Wali* and *Wilayah*?

13. There are similar yet different themes in Twelver Shi'a and *Ahl l-Sunnat wa jama'at* [Barelvi] attitudes to public life:

    Both can be acquiescent and quietist and then assertive. Can you describe how Imam 'Ali for example, demonstrates model Muslim attitudes and behaviour in public life?

14. Can you give reasons for devotion to the House of the Prophet *Ahl l-Bayt* in your stream of Islam?

    Sufi influence?

    Political emphasis?